



General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

28th plenary meeting

Friday, 22 September 2000, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The Acting President: I ask for the cooperation of all speakers in observing the voluntary 20-minute guideline for their statements. The full text of their statements will be distributed.

The first speaker is His Excellency Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, Chairman of the delegation of Rwanda.

Mr. Mutaboba (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): May I first, on behalf of our Minister for Foreign Affairs, who could not be here, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, join previous speakers in extending to the President our heartfelt congratulations on his election to preside over the fifty-fifth session.

In addition, I congratulate his eminent predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the quality and great quantity of activities carried out during the recent Summit.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome Tuvalu, the 189th Member of our Organization. We hope that other potential Members, such as Western Sahara in Africa, will soon be able to join us.

The Millennium Summit — in which the Head of State of Rwanda, Mr. Paul Kagame participated — evaluated the twentieth century and formulated recommendations for enhancing the work of the Organization in the twenty-first century, now beginning. As a number of speakers emphasized, the twentieth century was the era both of great and unprecedented technological triumphs and of crises as great as the new means of destruction.

The distressing feature of the First and Second World Wars was that they made use of the advanced technologies of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century to cause enormous human and material devastation. In 1918 and again in 1945 all humanity was overwhelmed by the terrifying consequences of a world war. "No more wars leading to the loss of millions of human lives"; "No more genocide": these were the calls of the founding countries of the United Nations when they met in San Francisco in October 1945.

Today, as in the past, the international community finds itself reliving horrors that it thought it had banished for ever, horrors that include the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It certainly was not a lack of theoretical principles of public morality or international law that contributed to preventing or stopping this genocide. These principles had even been greatly strengthened in 1948 by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and had been widely diffused throughout the world by many organizations that took up the banner of human rights.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



The Brahimi report (A/55/305) was needed. We welcome its conclusions and recommendations, and take this occasion to warmly congratulate our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, on having commissioned it and the two others that preceded it: the Srebrenica report and the courageous Carlsson report. Our Organization had its failures, but the Brahimi report tells us that we can do better in the future. To miss this unique opportunity to reflect on what must be done, and how, would be to renounce our responsibilities and the principles and values expressed in the Charter of our Organization. Another Rwanda or Srebrenica would disgrace us all.

Undoubtedly, we must look elsewhere for the true source of the problem. It is surprising that even today countries that claim to embrace human rights are delaying and using pretexts to block prosecution of the authors of the genocide. There are even some who — afraid to accept or think about what happened — refer to this genocide as what happened in Rwanda in 1994, being afraid even to think about it. To take just one example, I refer to the observations of Minister Yerodia Ndombasi on 16 September.

In sum, my delegation calls on the international community to draw every possible lesson from the genocide committed in our country, so that "Never again such a human tragedy" ceases to be an empty phrase. Much more urgent is the question of assistance to Rwanda for rebuilding and making good the huge material and moral damage caused by the 1994 genocide. Such assistance was recommended in the reports of the Independent Inquiry set up by the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity's international panel of eminent persons. All the members of the international community represented here can help Rwanda rebuild and develop. And each time we wish to do more for the Organization and humanity let the Brahimi report serve as a source of inspiration.

I take this opportunity to salute the Security Council discussions of 15 April, when the recommendations of the Carlsson report were considered and the Council was urged to use its influence to ensure that they were effectively followed up by other United Nations institutions and agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), from which we are awaiting special assistance as part of the development assistance programme for Rwanda. We venture to hope that the

reforms under way at UNDP will lead to the provision of assistance based on a sincere and enthusiastic partnership according to the British model eloquently outlined by Prime Minister Tony Blair during the Millennium Summit. It is a partnership steeped in equality, justice and fraternal solidarity for all. We invite all our partners to embrace this initiative, in their relations not only with Rwanda, but with all the other developing countries — especially the former colonies.

The reports that I have mentioned also justly call on the international community — beyond contributing to the task of overcoming the devastating effects of genocide — to contribute vigorously to preventing this crime against humanity, in particular by suppressing it. Those who hide, protect and advocate for the criminals responsible for the 1994 genocide should think twice before persisting in this evil behaviour.

I now come to the Congolese crisis, certain aspects of which can be seen as an extension of the genocide committed in Rwanda in 1994. It is worth recalling that after their defeat and withdrawal many militia members and former Rwandan soldiers who were authors of the genocide took refuge in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Not only were these former soldiers and militia members not disarmed at the time, but they have benefited from new military equipment and training, allowing them to commit acts of genocide along the borders and prepare for a repetition of the previous widespread genocide campaign. Is this not sufficient reason to ask a responsible Government to act to preserve the sovereignty of its country and the security of its people? The Assembly can well understand that this is hardly a case of a security pretext, but, rather, of a current reality.

The plan for a massive invasion by the genocidal forces was thwarted in November 1996 — thank God — by the forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Army. But from May 1997 to August 1998 it was necessary to once again repel infiltrations from the Congo and to resist other acts of genocide committed in the north-western part of our country. The horrors of this rebellion have been the source of a number of resolutions, but the world seems to have rapidly forgotten them.

It is in this context that our country now has a military presence in the Congo — a presence whose only purpose is to prevent a recurrence of genocide in

Rwanda by the same Interahamwe militia and soldiers of the previous regime. We have more or less succeeded in achieving our objectives. Since 1998 we have captured many soldiers of the previous regime and Interahamwe militia, contrary to what Minister Yerodia Ndombasi told the Assembly on 16 September. Most of these soldiers — there are many of them — have rejoined the army. We are continuing to hold 135 of them while they await a decision.

We have also succeeded in saving some of the Interahamwe and the soldiers of the former regimes, as well as innocent civilians who had been held hostage during all this time for purely military and political purposes. In the category of liberated hostages, 12,000 were repatriated since August 1998, and the process continues. We have established centres to receive them on our borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and several humanitarian organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have also been involved. This is a secret to no one, and it has been documented by the UNHCR at Goma and Gisenyi. Those who are against our successes say that these people are Congolese citizens that we have forced into exile in Rwanda, because their departure has created a vacuum in the operations of the allies of these forces of genocide. They are our citizens, and no one can claim to love them as much as we do. They are at home, awaiting the others with open arms.

My Government welcomed the signing of the Lusaka agreements in July 1999 and still upholds them. Their main principles are, first, that the inter-Congolese political negotiations should lead to a new political order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and, secondly, that the armed groups should be pursued and disarmed, including former Rwanda military and the Interahamwe authors of the 1994 genocide, who are still attempting to continue their misdeeds, encouraged by certain of our Congolese brothers who go so far as to deny their presence on Congolese territory with the sole purpose of vilifying us, to judge by the statement by Minister Yerodia Ndombasi last Saturday.

The Rwanda delegation deplores the Kinshasa Government's recently calling into question these same agreements, despite the fact that they are upheld by all the countries concerned of the subregion, the Organization of African Unity and the Security Council. Just before that, the Congolese Government

had created controversy by refusing to authorize the free movement of United Nations military observers; and that free movement would not be possible outside those agreements, to which that country is a party.

As far as Rwanda is concerned, we believe that, at this time, the Lusaka agreements constitute the only framework that will guarantee a lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the subregion. Any other approach in this matter would run the risk of dangerously jeopardizing the peace process now under way.

Furthermore, the slowness and hesitations observed in our Organization regarding the deployment of the forces of the United Nations Mission in the Congo must be reviewed, and advantage must be taken of the current offers to strengthen the presence of the United Nations in the zones evacuated by the signatory parties of the Lusaka agreements. Any attempt to reduce the force would only lead to the kind of catastrophe from which the Brahimi report tries to spare us.

I should like to take this opportunity to commend the growing role of regional and subregional organizations in resolving conflicts. As is well known, such a positive involvement has already led to considerable results in various parts of the world, including in South-East Asia and Western Africa. It is our hope that the United Nations will adopt a similar approach to regional contributions to its machinery for conflict resolution.

If the question of conflicts in the world continues to be one of the major preoccupations of our Organization, it would no doubt be a good idea to pay special attention to their prevention. This requires being attentive to the efforts made to eradicate, or at least attenuate, the root causes of conflicts, both domestic and external.

With respect to Rwanda, the halting of the 1994 genocide was followed by courageous policies inspired by the tragic lessons of our recent history. These policies were translated into the following actions for and factors of national reconciliation, as follows:

In July 1994, a Government of National Unity and a Parliament were established including all the components of the Rwanda population and all the political circles of the country. This was an integrative approach such as had never before been known in

independent Rwanda, despite the linguistic, socio-cultural and historical advantages that militate in its favour.

The policy of exclusion, which lasted more than 30 years in all sectors of national life, from education to employment, was eliminated. We are pleased to have abolished, 60 years after its introduction, the identification card, which categorized people according to their ethnic origin and their place of origin and on the basis of which decisions were taken to kill people or to spare their lives.

A skilled, professional national army was established, including the forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Army, which liberated the country, as well as a portion of the forces of the former regime that had separated themselves from the perpetrators of genocide. We welcome their bravery and their discipline. The United Nations needs troops of this type for difficult operations in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

In March 1999 the National Commission on Human Rights and the Commission for Unity and National Reconciliation were established.

The judicial system was rehabilitated, which guarantees the independence of the magistrature. This judicial system has been strengthened by a form of justice called *gacacha*, which, while keeping to international judicial norms, will benefit from major inputs of the population at the early stages of a trial. This will have the advantage of accelerating the prosecution of those accused of genocide.

In two and a half years more than 3 million refugees have been repatriated. This is all the more striking since Rwanda's refugee problem, having lasted for more than 30 years, is the most numerous and longest-standing in Africa. At present the only ones remaining outside the country are families of criminals responsible for genocide and some refugees whom Rwanda wants to repatriate, but who are still being manipulated by those criminals. Our head of State asked them to return in his inaugural statement at the Supreme Court, and some of them have begun to come back voluntarily to the country.

Democratic elections were held last year. Following the upcoming local elections, they will be completed in October. These are orientations that today guide the policy of unity and national reconciliation,

the need for which became clear after the genocide of 1994.

Beyond the eradication of genocide, there are many challenges that deserve the attention of the international community at the beginning of the new millennium. These relate to the gaps between developing countries and prosperous countries in the context of globalization, the reform of the United Nations system and many other current problems, such as the spread of AIDS.

With respect to the gap between developing countries and prosperous countries, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw gaps between industrialized countries and poor countries grow even wider. This resulted from technology as well as from political and commercial inequalities left over from the colonial era. After independence many development proposals were made, such as the provision of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development assistance, technology transfers, a new international economic order favouring fair remuneration for commodities, and so on.

All these strategies have been the subject of a number of international conferences. None of them has been implemented sustainably or consistently. Some of them have remained theoretical and have not even begun to be implemented as programmes. But it is never too late.

For some time now, we have been in an age of globalization of economies in the context of structural gaps that have not changed much since the sixties. My delegation would like to emphasize the urgent need for the preliminary adoption of certain measures to facilitate the establishment of machinery for efficient globalization. Is there any need to recall that the external debt of developing countries constitutes, in and of itself, a real handicap to their economic recovery? How can one talk about growth in a context where external debt absorbs 60 per cent or more of the export income of these same developing countries? What will be the result of globalization in an environment where the competition of market economies reduces in advance the role of certain parts of the world to that of eternal consumers, with the monopoly on production elsewhere? These are all questions that deserve urgent answers and solidarity on the part of the international community.

My delegation believes more particularly that the success of globalization requires courageous accompanying measures, such as eliminating the debt for poor countries and providing support for economic integration policies, in particular in Africa. This requires our world Organization to endow itself with machinery that can help to guide globalization.

For some time now, the United Nations has rightly been concerning itself, at the highest level, with the reform of the functioning of its structures. This is an urgent matter, as it affects what is at stake for the future and even the survival of all of humankind, which can no longer be managed in the same spirit and with the same structures as 55 years ago. We should remember that the number of Member States has increased from 51 in 1954 to 189 today; that is an irrefutable argument for democratization. In this same context, Africa, which has 10 times as many Member States in the United Nations as it did when the Organization was founded, must occupy the place it deserves in the major decision-making bodies of the United Nations, such as the Security Council and others. The Bretton Woods institutions must also change their character and behaviour if globalization and equity are to be real and consistent.

In conclusion, I would like to speak about that other challenge for our times: the AIDS pandemic. This disease is currently responsible for the loss of more human lives than the most deadly wars. The people of the poorest countries are the most vulnerable in the face of this disease of the century. The delegation of Rwanda would like, from this rostrum, to make an urgent appeal to the international community to show solidarity in the face of the threat of extinction of the human race that AIDS represents. Put simply, taking AIDS lightly trivializes the crime of genocide. Both are exterminating people and should be combated with vigour and determination.

More specifically, aid should be provided for humanitarian — if for no other — reasons, so that the least developed countries can benefit from the most up-to-date medicines, at affordable prices, that can provide relief from people suffering from AIDS and do all that they can to contain this scourge.

Furthermore, my delegation is convinced that an effort to mobilize the greatest possible financial resources would enable scientific research to take place to bring this disease, and others, such as malaria, which

are devastating a large part of the population, under control.

We hope that the twenty-first century, which is just beginning, will usher in a world of peace and solidarity that will meet the greatest aspirations of humanity.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis, Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Let me first of all congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his unanimous election to the mantle of the leadership of the world's foremost international body. He is presiding in this, the last year of the present century, following the profound commitments manifested at the Millennium Summit. We look forward in eager anticipation to the implementation of the Summit pledges, as small States are becoming more and more disillusioned with the actual manifestations and the selectivity of the United Nations.

I should like to offer congratulations to his predecessor, who, as we know, comes from a recently independent country — a country which had to struggle in order to be entrusted with the management of its own affairs. In him, we saw a genuine attempt to move towards some equilibrium in this body. As such, my country applauds his efforts, but we are still awaiting the day when small countries will receive the respect due to sovereign States.

This year we will be making a deliberately short statement, in the hope that the Assembly will concentrate on the myriad of problems with which we are plagued.

Small States do not equate with small problems. In reality, the reverse is often the norm, particularly when the State in question is still on the periphery — the periphery of the dominant industrial entities. In the case of my country, peripheral existence emerged in the post-Colombian era when, along with other Caribbean countries, we became colonies of exploitation, as opposed to colonies of settlement. Mercantilism demanded our production of agricultural commodities, whether indigo, cotton or sugar cane; it was a monoculture, designed solely and purposely for the betterment of the mother country, at the expense of the colonies.

But no doubt the question is being asked as to why I am raising that issue here. It is precisely because the lingering reality is that we are sometimes moved to ask ourselves if we are still victims of the "Robinson Crusoe" mentality. To be a colony of exploitation meant that the entity was an area of underdevelopment — an underdevelopment which meant that we were to remain in that state in perpetuity if we were to fulfil the precise conditions for exploitation.

Throughout history, smaller entities have been, as it were, invisible. We do not have small problems. How could that be the case when nuclear waste is still being trans-shipped through our waters, despite numerous and repeated protests, pleas and entreaties? We have a problem with the World Trade Organization (WTO), which rules in favour of the interests of multinational enterprises and the countries benefiting from the operations of those enterprises. The Windward Island producers of bananas were at a total disadvantage, as they could not afford to pay the cost of adequate representation before the WTO. In 1896, the silver-throated orator, William Jennings Bryan, stood up in California and asked whether mankind should be crucified upon a cross of gold. Today, we must ask if Windward Island humanity is to be snuffed out on a bed of yellow fruit, thereby sending a ripple effect throughout the Caribbean, culminating in deprivation, degradation, depression and the severest forms of dehumanization.

At the Millennium Summit round table, much time was spent talking about globalization, without the fundamental reality of that globalization — so-called free trade — being dealt with. In modern history, there has never been free trade. It has been advocated, encouraged and even preached about. John Bright and Richard Cobden have been acclaimed for their "gospel of free trade", but it has never been a reality. In the nineteenth century, it was propelled by the industrial and maritime countries which stood to benefit from it. In the twentieth century, it has emanated from the dominant States, and the statistics demonstrate that it has wrought havoc on most of the developing world.

This has primarily been the result of selfishness and the unwillingness to listen to and accept the concerns of those who suffer most from it. Yes, we benefit from the expanded use of the Internet, the greater access to education and the ability to travel abroad more frequently. But we have been hurt by

extraordinary pressures to control our economic advancement, whether by the influence of multinational enterprises or by maritime activity, which deplete our resources and pollute our environment. Instead of our nutritional level improving, the statistics again show that poverty has spread, and the sick in poor countries cannot access the medicines needed to improve the health of their societies. If we are to have globalization, let us recognize its imperfections and address them meaningfully. Let us not preach, "do as I say but not as I do".

Globalization does not have a human face. We continue to hear about the opportunities for the developing countries, but we are still waiting for the benefits to be made manifest. While we wait, we would like to remind this body that we remain disappointed that the International Criminal Court will not be dealing with illegal trafficking in narcotics or with illegal trade in arms and terrorism. Let us be heard. Let us be seen. We do not have small problems.

At the Millennium Summit, my Prime Minister, Lester Bryant Bird, clearly demonstrated how the world's economic and political agenda is devised and directed by a few of its most powerful Governments. He stated that Antigua and Barbuda, as well as several other small countries,

"have experienced the most blatant disregard for the rules of international law, rules that have been spelled out by the General Assembly and upheld by the International Court of Justice." (A/55/PV.3)

The principle now is "might is right". The Prime Minister pointed out that all of this is being done by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which believes that its States will lose capital to other States because of their more competitive tax regimes. They have gone further by dubbing tax incentives "harmful tax competition" and linking it most unfairly with money-laundering activities, even when there is no evidence for the charge. My country has voluntarily agreed to contribute more for peacekeeping even with our strapped finances, as we accept our role as a contributor to the welfare of the globe. We would likewise hope that the dominant be fair to us.

I can go on and on with our difficulties and our victimization primarily due to our pusillanimous nature. For the first time in several years we have not elaborated on natural disasters. By now all members of

the United Nations should know of our plight. We would however wish to speak on a decolonization issue.

Antigua and Barbuda has followed closely the question of Western Sahara, and even though we do not have an international intelligence system, we are calling for an implementation of the referendum, as the signals for renewed violence, if the United Nations does not carry out its pledge, are quite clear. We do not wish to see, once again, the carnage witnessed in East Timor.

The conflict, as it has been underlined through resolutions of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and the Movement of Non-Aligned States, must be resolved through the exercise of the Saharawi people of their right to self-determination. The international community has for decades adopted this legal framework as a basis for a just and durable solution to the conflict. We believe that the referendum can be organized before next year, and we are calling for such. We do not wish another situation with the outbreak of violence.

Let me sum up with a few things that Antigua and Barbuda would like to see at the United Nations. We would like to press for the end of "selective" multilateralism and move towards the incorporation of "genuine" multilateralism. We desire to have a reform process expanded beyond the Secretariat and practised among all countries of the Organization. Reform should not connote expansion, it should mean restructuring. The principle of rotation on the major decision-making bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), should become a reality. And may I repeat: the principle of rotation should become a reality. The concept of globalization should be viewed in its entirety, and a study should be done on its effects on developing countries. The gross national product should not be used as the sole criterion for graduating a State from concessionary loans, and the vulnerability index, on which Antigua and Barbuda is ranked very high, should be taken into consideration. The principle of "the equality of sovereign States" should be used to guard against the marginalization of States within the United Nations system. The countries that have pledged to contribute 0.7 per cent of their official development assistance (ODA) should carry out their commitment in this regard. There should be some form of equity in regard to geographic groupings within the United Nations. While we understand the

reasons why the existing groups were created, the time has come for a more equitable arrangement. The nations comprising the United Nations should become truly united.

Antigua and Barbuda will continue to fulfil its obligations to its citizens and to this body. We recognize the benefits that we accrue from our involvement in this parliament of parliaments. We have benefited and will continue to benefit from the programmes of the various bodies and agencies of this body. We are, however, confident that we have contributed towards global progress, and we remain ready to continue our contribution to the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hassan Kibelloh, Chairman of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kibelloh (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, I should like to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to the presidency of this Millennium Assembly. I also want to congratulate his predecessor for his invaluable contribution and his outstanding leadership during the fifty-fourth General Assembly. In the same vein, I should like to register my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for the excellent manner in which he is conducting the affairs of the Organization. Let me also take this opportunity to express our delight in welcoming the Republic of Tuvalu as the newest member of the United Nations family.

Tanzania is gratified that the recently ended Millennium Summit addressed some of the most pertinent issues and challenges facing the United Nations and its Members in the new millennium. Those issues include development and poverty eradication; the effects of globalization, including technological disparities; conflict prevention, management and resolution; disarmament; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. It was recognized that Africa and, particularly, the least developed countries suffer most and hence demand urgent remedial action by the international community.

Poverty remains one of the areas of great concern in Africa. The number of poor people in our region living on less than one dollar a day is estimated to be 300 million. That number represents more than 40 per cent of Africa's total population. Indications are that the number of poor people in the continent is

likely to increase as Africa's output continues to drop. There is therefore an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy for Africa to address poverty eradication with all its ramifications. The strategy should include a compendium of measures aimed at capacity-building in the development process, including social services. The implementation of such a far-reaching strategy for poverty eradication would very much depend on the availability of resources. Bearing in mind that in 2001 the United Nations will convene a High-level Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development, it is our hope that the issue of mobilizing resources for the development of Africa will be thoroughly addressed.

Official development assistance continues to be particularly critical in supporting development efforts in Africa and the least developed countries. It is sad to note that flows of official development assistance have fallen to an all-time low of 0.2 per cent, far from the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries. My delegation therefore wishes to appeal to our development partners to reverse the trend of declining resources and increase the level of official development assistance contributions.

Many African countries are undertaking painful reforms aimed at attracting foreign direct investment. However, foreign direct investment flows have been minimal. Investors should feel encouraged to invest in Africa because the competitive rate of return on foreign direct investment stands at between 24 per cent and 30 per cent. That rate is higher than those of all developed countries, which stand at between 16 per cent and 18 per cent. We therefore call on Governments and relevant international organizations to assist in sensitizing potential international investors to the possibility of directing their investments to Africa.

The various debt relief initiatives pursued by the international community have been helpful, but not sufficient, in providing a meaningful solution to the debt problem of the developing countries. In some of those countries, external debt service constitutes a major drain on scarce resources, taking at least 30 per cent of the national income. In that regard, we welcome the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative to support some of the poor countries in their efforts to resolve the external debt problem. My Government appreciates being one of the countries

which have attained eligibility under this scheme. We call upon the institutions concerned to speed up the process towards our reaching the completion point so that we can fully benefit from HIPC relief.

Commenting on the HIPC Initiative, my President, Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, has had this to say:

"Tanzania welcomes the revisions made to the HIPC Initiative. If implemented in full they will provide additional debt relief, which in turn will facilitate the war on poverty and will contribute to sustainable growth and development if managed well. However, if growth is to be sustained, adequate levels of external funding must complement our economic reform efforts. Debt relief under the HIPC Initiative should also not be a substitute for increased bilateral non-debt-creating aid, and neither should it be financed through reallocation of committed aid."

Even acknowledging the importance of the HIPC initiative, the burden of meeting debt service payments would remain heavy even after debt relief for most of the least developed countries. We therefore call upon the donor community to increase HIPC debt relief and to consider additional relief measures, including debt cancellation, so that scarce resources will be released to cater for economic development and poverty eradication programmes.

The development of the least developed countries depends on improvement of their capacity to produce goods and services. Improvement of terms of trade and market access for the goods of least developed countries in the developed countries' markets would further contribute towards poverty eradication efforts. In that regard, we call upon developed countries to provide unhindered market access for goods from developing countries, particularly from least developed countries. In the same context, my delegation calls for speedy implementation of the World Trade Organization's Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance which will facilitate the integration of least developed countries into the world trading system.

The development process of developing countries very much depends on access to technology and on the endogenous capacity to develop it. We are encouraged that the Millennium Summit reiterated the need to assist developing countries to leapfrog into new

technologies in order to close the existing technology gap between developed and developing countries, especially least developed countries. It is our sincere hope that the Millennium Declaration will be translated into a concrete programme of action to assist developing countries to develop the critical technologies, including information technologies, needed for their development. We therefore call upon our development partners and all relevant international institutions to facilitate the transfer of technology, including environmentally sound technologies, on favourable terms.

My delegation believes that South-South cooperation is an important means of realizing some of the objectives of economic development. Tanzania fully supports the programme of action adopted last April in Havana, Cuba, at the South Summit.

Tanzania recognizes and fully supports the role of women in the development process. Here, the Government has adopted a number of specific measures aimed at enhancing the participation of women in decision-making processes, and at bringing about equal access to education and health, and access to credit on a preferential basis. In the area of representation, for example, the Government has increased the minimum quota of women parliamentarians from 15 per cent to 20 per cent. The Government has also passed legislation that criminalizes discriminatory activities against women. Furthermore, the Land Act was revised in 1999 to enable women to own land, the major means of production in Tanzania. Tanzania is firmly committed, therefore, to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. We therefore call on the international community to support our efforts in this regard.

Serious pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are threatening the economic and social development of developing countries, especially African and least developed countries. For example, the scale of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has grown to alarming proportions in Africa. The Security Council has recognized this menace as constituting a security threat. Moreover, the Millennium Summit has underscored the urgency of adopting effective action to combat the scourge. Tanzania urges the international community to assist developing countries in this endeavour, particularly in education and access to affordable treatment.

Disarmament, peace and security continue to be crucial to the aspirations of all humanity, and therefore they constitute a critical challenge of the new millennium. The existence of huge arsenals of nuclear weapons poses a major potential threat to world peace and security. These weapons continue to represent a threat to the survival of mankind. Tanzania calls for the complete destruction and elimination of all nuclear weapons. The United Nations also needs to urgently address the problem of small arms and light weapons, which fuel most of the ongoing conflicts in various regions of the world. In this context, we strongly support the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Millennium Summit addressed extensively the conflict situations existing in some countries, including those of Africa. The Summit reaffirmed the existence of the intrinsic link between peace and development, which requires an integrated approach to conflict prevention, management and resolution. While supporting United Nations peace efforts, we note with concern that there has been a slow and an inadequate response to African conflicts from the United Nations.

In Angola, it is with apprehension that we bear witness to the continuing hostilities and the grave humanitarian situation brought about by Jonas Savimbi and his organization, UNITA; they have blatantly violated the decisions of the Security Council regarding the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. It is disturbing that Mr. Savimbi has been able to sustain his insurgency by violating the sanctions imposed against UNITA by the Security Council. We call upon the international community to continue its support to the Government of Angola.

On Burundi, my delegation is pleased to note that after protracted negotiations between the parties involved in the Burundi conflict, the Burundi peace and reconciliation agreement was concluded in Arusha, Tanzania on 28 August 2000. We welcome the agreement and commend the Facilitator, President Nelson Mandela, for his role in reconciling the parties. We also commend the regional leaders for their efforts in support of the Burundi peace process. Although a small number of parties to the conflict did not sign the agreement, efforts were made to ensure that all of them would sign it. As I speak here, most of the parties have now signed. It is our hope that the parties will abide by the terms of the agreement and afford the people of

Burundi the opportunity to realize their aspirations for peace and development. We call upon the United Nations and the international community to extend support to the agreement.

As for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lusaka Agreement remains the basis for the resolution of the conflict in that country. It is unfortunate, though, that there is an impasse in the implementation of the Agreement. One of the reasons for the existing situation is the mistrust among the parties. The delay in the deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has created a vacuum that has further contributed to the impasse. Tanzania supports Security Council resolution 1234 (1999). We also urge the Security Council to deploy the peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as possible.

On Somalia, we welcome the agreement reached in Djibouti on the formation of the Government of that country. In this regard, we congratulate the Government of Djibouti for its constructive role in the reconciliation process.

Concerning Western Sahara, Tanzania reiterates its support for the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people and the effort of the United Nations to organize and supervise an impartial, free and fair referendum, in accordance with the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara and the relevant Security Council and other United Nations resolutions. We urge the United Nations to conduct, as soon as possible, the referendum on the basis of the preparations that have so far been made. The lessons of East Timor should not be ignored.

On the Middle East, Tanzania continues to support the cause of the Palestinian people. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing peace process aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in that volatile region.

There is a direct linkage between conflicts and the incidence of refugees and internally displaced persons. In this respect, Tanzania finds itself in the very difficult situation of hosting more than 800,000 refugees, most of whom are products of the crisis in the Great Lakes region. This is a huge burden for a poor country like Tanzania. Besides, refugees pose many problems relating to security and environmental degradation. There is an urgent need for the international community to increase its support to the refugees, as well as to the refugee-hosting countries. In

the same vein, we reiterate our call for international burden-sharing and responsibility in refugee situations. A definitive solution to the refugee situation evidently lies in resolving conflicts so as to enable the repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin.

One of the pressing reform issues in the United Nations is the reform of the Security Council. Among the significant changes of our time is the liberalization and democratization of economic and political processes. The Security Council cannot persist in being an exception. Its composition and powers must bear a relationship to the democratic ideals necessary for its continued relevance and legitimacy. It is our hope that the Council membership will be expanded in both categories and that such expansion should include both developed and developing countries.

Furthermore, Tanzania believes that the capacity of the United Nations to effectively carry out its mandate is contingent upon the willingness of all Member States to support it politically as well as financially. In this regard, we call upon the Member States to provide it with adequate resources on a timely and predictable basis.

Tanzania also welcomes the many reform proposals and measures that have been introduced to improve working methods, both at the Secretariat and at intergovernmental levels. For that effort to succeed, there has to be consensus among Member States on the best method to manage change in the United Nations.

In conclusion, allow me to observe that the Millennium Assembly, like the preceding Summit, is an act of partnership. We can only hope, therefore, that the renewed enthusiasm and the recommitment to the Charter of the United Nations will galvanize our energies and enable us to rise to and fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the Organization and its peoples, as espoused in the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ignacio Arcaya, Chairman of the delegation of Venezuela.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I again extend our congratulations to the President on his election.

The Millennium Summit has charted for us a plan of action for the immediate future. We must consistently bear that plan of action in mind as our main priority, and direct all our work towards its

effective implementation. We cannot view the final document adopted by the most important gathering of world leaders ever held as a mere expression of good intentions and act as though it were a matter of routine and as if nothing had happened.

First, we must take action to ensure that the vast majority of the human race living in developing countries make significant progress towards the attainment of sustainable development. We must make special efforts with respect to the millions of men, women and children who live in poverty. They must be given means of subsistence, education and medical care.

Our most important shared instrument, the United Nations, is currently ill-equipped for that enormous task. We must therefore focus on giving it the power and means to play an effective role in that important effort. We believe that the United Nations must play a central role in the struggle for development. To that end, we must consider without delay ways to strengthen the General Assembly, our most democratic and open institution. It is equally necessary to strengthen the Organization's primary instrument in this field, the Economic and Social Council, which should become a real council for human development, with authority and ability to act comparable to the Security Council's.

The message of the Millennium Summit is very clear: peace and development are equally important, and each depends on the other. The most urgent tasks in the struggle against poverty are also clear: to alleviate the debt burden of highly indebted poor countries; to tackle the scourges of AIDS and malaria; and to provide education for all. In all of those tasks the United Nations must play a leadership role.

In order to meet the established goals of reducing world poverty by half by 2015, we must ensure that national Government's measures adopted in accordance with the social platform of United Nations conferences, to benefit their populations in the areas of health, food and education, are accompanied by international cooperation based on solidarity, in order that those tasks are carried out efficiently and promptly.

It is therefore particularly important, in order to support the objectives of, and strategies for, poverty eradication, that developed countries meet their commitment to dedicate 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to official development assistance.

It is equally urgent to ensure that the rules regulating international trade and finance are just and equitable, not only in theory but also in practice, so that they lead to development for all, and not merely to the further enrichment of a privileged minority.

In that regard, the high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development, to be held next year, should result in effective coordination and harmonization of all the efforts Governments and international organizations, so that those efforts may bear tangible fruits meeting the needs of all countries. The United Nations must be the coordinating centre for the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

With regard to foreign debt, it is vital that the international community promote, on the basis of North-South dialogue, the adoption of concerted measures for the effective resolution of this problem, which is seriously weakening the sustained economic growth of developing countries affected by the excessive burden of debt servicing. We believe that it will be necessary to consider the timely rescheduling on favourable terms of the international financial commitments of developing countries, including highly indebted poor countries and medium-income countries.

The freeing of resources currently allocated to debt payment will make it possible for those countries more efficiently to meet the real needs of their populations in the areas of food, health and education. It will also promote their peoples' participation and full integration within their respective societies. It is also necessary to recognize the economic and social costs incurred by developing countries in meeting foreign debt payments.

Shared responsibility in dealing with economic and social issues, as well as with regard to questions of peace, requires more intensive and effective participation by developing countries in the world economy, particularly in decision-making and the formulation of international and economic norms.

The efforts of the developing countries towards poverty eradication, economic and social progress, sustained economic growth and sustainable development are dependent on a favourable international economic environment and on international cooperation for renewed and strengthened development. The magnitude and urgency of the challenges facing us in the economic and social sphere

require the support of all Member States in order to realize the aspirations of those who cry out for a more equitable and just world, in which poverty eradication and the promotion of development are a genuine expression of international peace and stability.

As for our other main priority, the maintenance of peace, we must learn from our experience — both from our mistakes and from our achievements.

The United Nations must be provided with the means to anticipate and prevent conflicts, not just put an end to them once they have erupted.

In this respect, disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is vital, as is the elimination of the illicit arms trade. Also key is the struggle against transnational criminal activities such as terrorism and the illicit drug trade.

In this context, we welcome the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on the reduction of the nuclear threat. We believe that this could help strengthen the commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons, as recently agreed at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Venezuela supports the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year. That Conference will be a perfect opportunity for us to combine our efforts to adopt measures of cooperation to eliminate this illicit activity, which has links to organized transnational crime and is encouraged by unscrupulous groups or individuals who act unlawfully.

The role of the United Nations as the only forum empowered to authorize the use of force must be reaffirmed, without distinctions or exceptions, apart from self-defence, which in turn must be in strict compliance with the provisions of the Charter.

It is urgent to this end to make effective progress towards reform of the Security Council. This does not mean mere cosmetic change, but rather real reform, with a view to ensuring its credibility as a democratic, transparent and impartial organ in which no country has the right to block, through the use of the veto, action agreed by the majority.

If we wish the Millennium Summit to have real significance, if we want it to be remembered not only

because of the milestone represented by the participation of an unprecedented number of world leaders, we must take concrete action at this session of the General Assembly. Towards that end, Venezuela fully supports the proposal made recently by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay to create a working group to ensure implementation of the Millennium Summit Declaration. We believe that this group should be open to participation by all Member States. We believe also that the representatives of the countries that co-chaired the Summit and those that presided over the four round tables, as well as the Chairmen of the regional groups, should participate actively in this process.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius.

Mr. Gayan (Mauritius): It gives me great pleasure to address the Assembly under the leadership of Mr. Harri Holkeri. I offer him our heartiest congratulations on his election to preside over this first session of the new millennium and assure him of the total support and cooperation of my delegation.

We would like also to thank Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, for the excellent manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. This year again, we wish to compliment the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his remarkable leadership in the conduct of the work of the United Nations. We pay special tribute also to the President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General for their imaginative and tireless efforts in achieving the resounding success of the Millennium Summit, held here just a few weeks ago. We also wish to welcome Tuvalu as the newest Member of the United Nations family.

During that historic Summit — the largest gathering of heads of State or Government the world has ever seen — the relevance and importance of the United Nations in a global society was emphasized. World leaders pledged most prominently their commitment to ensuring that the United Nations adapts to the new era and strengthens its capacity to deal with the challenges of maintaining peace and security, eliminating poverty and promoting development and progress for the benefit of all humanity.

Since its inception, the United Nations has been a beacon of hope to mankind for a more secure and prosperous world. The recently adopted Millennium Declaration provides fresh impetus to the United Nations to rededicate itself to the fulfilment of the lofty ideals of our Organization, namely to uphold world peace and security and promote cooperation and development in all areas of human endeavour.

The maintenance of world peace and security remains the biggest challenge for our Organization. The continued existence of nuclear arsenals and the threat of a nuclear disaster represent a major impediment to the maintenance of peace and security. Following the end of the cold war, the feeling of insecurity created by nuclear militarization has diminished, but the international community's aspiration to global disarmament and the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction within a defined time-frame has eluded us.

We welcome all the efforts the international community is making towards achieving universal acceptance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Yet more than 30,000 nuclear weapons are deployed around the world, including weapons that are still maintained in a high state of readiness. The risk that nuclear weapons may explode, whether by design or by accident, is ever growing. My delegation is convinced that the early convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament to address issues of global denuclearization, including the total elimination of all existing nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame, is of critical importance. Such a conference would allow all States, most importantly those possessing nuclear capabilities and which do not fall under the purview of the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to voice their concerns and contribute substantially towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This is a debt we owe to generations yet unborn.

The role of the Security Council in the crucial area of international peace and security is evident. However, this central organ of our Organization will be rendered even more effective if it is further strengthened to make it respond positively to the emerging new realities which the new millennium is bound to confront.

Members of the United Nations attach great importance to the need for reform of this supreme

body. It is to be noted that under the existing provisions of the Charter, which date back from a time when two thirds of the Members of the United Nations were still under colonial rule, a handful of States on the Security Council have the power to make decisions that bind the whole membership. Such a mode of operation is completely out of tune with today's realities, and, for this institution to retain its credibility, it should undergo a comprehensive reform, taking into consideration proper and equitable geographical representation.

In this regard, Mauritius supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the expansion and representativity of the Security Council, and we look forward to an early conclusion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council.

We support an increase in the membership of the Security Council, and we are in favour of making the Council an effective representative body that can act in the interests of humankind at large at all times.

The meeting of the Security Council at the level of heads of State during the Millennium Summit was an unparalleled opportunity for the 15 Members to discuss, at the highest level, how to make peacekeeping operations more responsive. We are all aware that deployment of United Nations troops in conflict situations is seen as the last chance for the restoration of peace and, in this venture, we simply cannot afford to fail. Therefore, the discussions that took place at the summit level of the Security Council need to be seriously pursued so that the future orientation of peacekeeping operations may be effected on a sounder basis.

In this respect, we welcome the proposals for improving the United Nations peacekeeping performance, as contained in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations — the Brahimi Report — and we look forward to their speedy implementation.

It is indeed a sad reflection that at the dawn of a new century, several African nations, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Somalia and the Comoros remain trapped in civil conflicts with disastrous consequences for millions of people on the continent and in the

subregion. At the regional level, the OAU, as well as leaders of the subregions concerned, have spared no efforts to address each of these conflicts, but we need to realize that no great success has been achieved so far. The intransigence of the main protagonists involved continues to remain the stumbling block towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

The involvement of the United Nations in these conflicts has unfortunately also met with little success. We need to be imaginative, and we need to explore, with the civil society in each country in conflict, ways and means to convincingly establish that the fruits of peace are achievable. We need to look at the permanence of our interests, and these are based in peace and stability.

We also note with great concern that, despite all the efforts and steps taken by the OAU for a speedy return to constitutional order in the Comoros, the Anjouanese separatists and the military leadership in Moroni have signed the Fomboni Declaration in defiance of the OAU and the international community. We urge the international community to refrain from lending any support to the Fomboni Joint Declaration which, we believe, will undermine the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. Indeed, it is unacceptable that the future of the archipelago of the Comoros be compromised by two individuals who are non-elected and do not represent the aspirations of the population. We reiterate our support to the OAU in its ongoing efforts aimed at resolving the crisis, in accordance with the provisions of the Antananarivo accord, which remains the most viable framework for a lasting, consensual and durable solution to the crisis. We call on the military regime and the separatists in Anjouan to cooperate with the OAU so as to achieve an early resolution of the crisis.

We welcome the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea this year. This is a positive step, and we urge the OAU, the United Nations and other States to continue support for these two countries to take the next steps to conclude a settlement for lasting peace. Our region deserves no less.

While, inevitably, the international community, through the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, must continue to do all it can to end the existing conflicts and prevent new ones, there is an important aspect of civil conflict that cannot

be overlooked any longer. It has been established beyond doubt that civil conflicts such as those in Angola and Sierra Leone have resulted from personal ambition or greed for private enrichment on the part of powerful individuals, rather than in pursuit of a legitimate cause and struggle for the common good. In pursuit of their sinister designs, these individuals wage long wars on and against their own people and, acting with impunity, inflict untold suffering on the masses, including women, the elderly and children, cause refugee problems within and outside their national frontiers, and retard development and progress of their countries. We believe that such dangerous persons should not only be condemned and stopped as early as possible from pursuing their unpatriotic designs, but also should be made to answer to their people and to the international community for the crimes they commit.

The proposed International Criminal Court should serve as the tribunal of the international community to try and punish such individuals and, the sooner it starts functioning, the better it will be for humanity at large. The International Criminal Court will not only be a deterrent for people who engage in heinous crimes but will also be an important instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unless such a step is taken, the world will continue to face similar tragedies, and the perpetrators of such tragedies will go unpunished.

At long last, we have seen a glimmer of hope for the suffering people of Somalia. We congratulate the leaders of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) for their initiative in putting together a peace and reconciliation process that will allow for the establishment of a representative government to take charge of the affairs of the country. We appeal to all factions in Somalia to come together and to take part in this new initiative, with a view to stopping the misery that the Somali people have endured for too long.

Important steps have been made this year towards peace in the Middle East. We congratulate President Arafat and Prime Minister Barak for the courage they demonstrated recently during the difficult negotiations in Camp David under the guidance of President Clinton. We believe that, having reached such a crucial stage of the negotiations, President Arafat and Prime Minister Barak must meet the daunting challenge of taking further steps forward to reach a final agreement.

We are confident that both leaders have the capacity to bridge the gaps and reach a mutually acceptable and satisfactory agreement. We appreciate that the issues outstanding in the path of such an agreement are delicate, but we are confident that the leaders of the region will respond to the ardent wish of peoples around the world for a peaceful Middle East.

It may sound like an anachronism, but it has happened just a few months ago in the Pacific region — namely in Fiji and in the Solomon Islands — that small bands of thugs have overturned democratically elected Governments. In the case of Fiji, Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry together with his whole Cabinet of Ministers, was held hostage for as long as 56 days, in a struggle for political power. The Prime Minister was set free only after he finally conceded that his Government would resign.

The international community watched helplessly as the tragic situation unfolded in Fiji. The fact that this is not the first time that a democratically elected Government is overthrown by unorthodox and violent means makes the situation all the more serious and calls for the immediate attention of the international community. Mauritius condemns unreservedly all attempts by any group, anywhere, to thwart the will of the people by force. I am reminded here of the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General at the opening of the OAU Summit in Lomé this year when, applauding the OAU decision to exclude Governments that have come to power by unconstitutional means from participating in OAU meetings, he expressed the wish that some day the United Nations also would take a similar decision. The time has come for us to seriously consider such avenues in order to send a clear signal to people who are bent upon perpetrating constitutional violations in total disregard of the will of the people.

Mauritius remains fully committed to the respect and promotion of human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. These principles are enshrined in our Constitution. With regard to human rights, our commitment goes far beyond our national borders, as reflected in our membership in various United Nations committees, where we play an active role. Multi-party, free and fair elections constitute core traditions jealously cherished by the people of Mauritius. In the exercise of our valued democratic rights, on 11 September last, just 10 days ago, the people of Mauritius, for the seventh time since our

independence in 1968, elected a new Government. This Government remains committed to supporting strongly, at the national, regional and international levels, the principles I have mentioned earlier.

Since we met in September last, we have witnessed several acts of terrorism in various parts of the world endangering the lives of numerous innocent people. The hijacking of an Indian Airlines jet, the kidnapping of unsuspecting tourists from a Malaysian holiday resort and bomb attacks in some capitals are grim reminders of the dangers we face at the hands of unscrupulous and heartless fanatics. We condemn all acts of terrorism and call on the international community to take concerted action to deal with this problem. For our part, Mauritius stands prepared to play a significant role in the United Nations and its various organs to combat all such acts which pose a threat to international peace and security.

I had some remarks on people-centred development, debt and globalization. I refer delegates to the text that will be circulated. I will now talk about regional cooperation.

Mauritius attaches great priority to global partnership in addressing the key issues of poverty alleviation, achieving sustainable growth and development, and peace and security. We believe that regional cooperation continues to be the inevitable route towards strengthening international partnership and cooperation. Regional cooperation not only is desirable, but constitutes a necessary dimension in the process of the regional integration of many economies into the global economy.

Small island developing States, which constitute one fifth of the membership of the United Nations, are in a particularly difficult situation due to their vulnerability to a wide range of ecological, climatic and economic factors. The specificities of these States have been articulated in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Constraints to their sustainable development include a narrow resource base that does not allow them to benefit from economies of scale, and the fact that they have small domestic markets. They also rely heavily on external markets, which are usually geographically distant, and costs for transportation, energy and infrastructure are high. In addition, small island States have little resilience to natural disasters. A vulnerability index of

socio-economic and other parameters has been prescribed for these States in the Barbados Programme of Action. We urge the United Nations and other international organizations to coordinate their efforts in developing and refining such an index, which should be used, together with other factors, by the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions to accord special and preferential treatment to this category of State.

I wish to say a few words now about the Chagos archipelago and the island of Tromelin. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is, under the United Nations system, an acquired and inalienable right of every State, however big or small. We are conscious that the United Nations favours the completion of the process of decolonization.

For a number of years now, we have continuously brought before the General Assembly the question of the Chagos archipelago, which has always formed part of the State of Mauritius. This Assembly will recall that the Chagos archipelago, including the island of Diego Garcia, was detached by the colonial Power just before our independence, in violation of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of December 1960 — the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples — and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, which prohibits the dismemberment of colonial territories prior to the accession to independence. We have all along sought to resolve this issue bilaterally with the United Kingdom through dialogue, but there has been no tangible progress so far. This issue has now reached a critical stage and we are extremely anxious to have meaningful negotiations with the United Kingdom with a view to resolving this matter within the shortest possible time. We also reiterate our demand that, pending a resolution of this issue, the former residents of the Chagos archipelago and their families, who were forcibly evicted and sent to Mauritius by the colonial Power, be allowed to return to their homeland.

We launch a fresh appeal to the former colonial Power, the United Kingdom, to come forward and engage in serious and purposeful discussions with us towards the early settlement of the Chagos archipelago question. We wish to stress that Mauritius will never abandon its intention to reunite its territory and to assert its sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

We also urge France, with which we have been discussing the issue of the return to us of the island of Tromelin, another outer island territory of Mauritius, to work with us constructively for an early resolution of this important issue. There is an agreement in principle for the co-determination of the island and its surrounding maritime space and we need to work out further modalities so as to arrive at a final solution on this issue.

(spoke in French)

I was gratified by the meeting, on 6 September 2000, of heads of State and Government of French-speaking States Members of the United Nations. That meeting allowed us to consider and arrive at the truth that the United Nations is the keystone that will allow mankind to free itself from the chains and other prejudices that hinder the evolution of international affairs and globalization, the two main engines of a better future for all. This meeting offered French-speaking States Members of the United Nations the opportunity firmly to assert their determination to achieve that objective.

I wish to stress that the future to which we aspire and in which we place our hopes must develop in conditions of respect for and promotion of the plurality of our peoples, their cultural and ethnic diversity and their multilingualism. We are duty-bound to respect, maintain and preserve the nature of our world, that rainbow of many cultures which, through globalization and the United Nations, will be a source of enormous wealth for States and individuals.

The Republic of Mauritius daily lives out this vision of the future. Our experience prompts us to subscribe to that vision for the common good. Hopes and dreams are built on concrete action. With the assistance of all its Member States, the United Nations must enjoy better and greater means. Only thus will peace become a tangible reality. Without peace and security, any effort at development is doomed to failure and the happiness to which the peoples of the world aspire will remain dead letter.

(spoke in English)

It goes without saying that, to achieve the objectives of a more peaceful, just and prosperous world, nations need to rededicate themselves to new commitments in the twenty-first century. Our delegation is ready to assume this responsibility and

looks forward to a fruitful outcome for the session that lies ahead under Mr. Holkeri's leadership.

I wish to end on a note of optimism with regard to the capacity of the United Nations to address global issues and to spearhead development and progress. My delegation is confident that our Organization and its specialized agencies are poised to play an even greater role in global reconstruction. We live in a highly demanding world. It wants results, seeks accountability and is not ready to condone failures. We all have a responsibility to make the world a safer place and to ensure a better future for our people. We can do it. Let us do it.

Before I conclude, however, I wish to take this opportunity to confirm the candidature of Mauritius for election to one of the non-permanent seats in the Security Council in the elections that are scheduled to take place next month. As far back as January 2000, Mauritius announced to all countries of the East African region that we would seek election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. At that time, Mauritius was the only declared candidate. The Government of Mauritius considers itself fully qualified to serve on the Security Council, which is the supreme organ of the United Nations, in the larger interests of peace and security and to contribute in a substantial measure to the important work of our Organization.

As a multi-party democracy in a multi-ethnic society, Mauritius has a track record in international relations and we consider that the standing of the Security Council depends upon that of its constituent members. The Security Council will be called upon to take important decisions in the interests of peace and security and it is important that the Security Council act as a homogeneous body. It is the wish of my country that our candidature be considered on its merits. We will very much appreciate the General Assembly's support in this regard.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Haile Weldensae, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Weldensae (Eritrea): At the outset, I wish to extend my congratulations to Mr. Holkeri on his unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that, under his able and wise guidance, this session will successfully accomplish its tasks.

I would also like to express appreciation and thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for the effectiveness with which he directed the work of the last session.

I also take this opportunity to extend congratulations to the Republic of Tuvalu on becoming the latest Member of the United Nations.

We shall not forget to express our thanks and appreciation to our Secretary-General, not only for his tireless efforts to ensure respect for the values, purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, but also for his far-sighted and thought-provoking millennium report.

The fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly is meeting in the wake of the Millennium Summit, whose Declaration embodies three fundamental messages. First, it reaffirms that the ideals and goals of the United Nations are still sacred to humanity and that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are as valid today as they were in the past. Secondly, it reminds us that the lofty principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter require us to continuously strengthen the United Nations and to make the necessary adjustments and changes to enable it to meet the challenges of justice, peace and security, poverty and disease, socio-economic development, the inequities of the global economy and the protection of the environment. Thirdly, respect for the ideals and observance of the purposes and principles of the United Nations remain the essential keys to the creation of a peaceful, prosperous and humane new world order. To this end, the Declaration enjoins us to be loyal to these common ideals, goals, values and principles. It reminds us that each State has a responsibility to act not only by itself, but also within a regional system, to give the loyalty that is due to these values, goals, purposes and principles.

In this connection, I wish to join others before me who have reminded us of the urgent need to reform the United Nations, including in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly, with a view to enabling the Organization to reflect the realities of the times and to empower it to meet effectively and efficiently the challenges of the day and the future.

I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the people and the Government of the State of Eritrea to the noble ideals and values, as well as the purposes and

principles, of the United Nations. Having made supreme sacrifices and paid dearly, during a 30-year struggle for independence and membership in the international community, Eritreans appreciate how essential the United Nations and its Charter are to their well-being and prosperity. Having fully experienced the horrors of a long war and the benefits of a short peace, they recognize the need for the peaceful and just settlement of disputes and for cooperation for mutual benefit in the long human struggle to create an international order based on justice and equality.

To this end, Eritrean foreign policy has been premised on the assumption that the threat or use of force can never be an instrument of foreign policy, and that even in a clear case self-defence it must be used only after all available methods of peacefully resolving disputes have been exhausted — and then only with extreme caution.

It is for this reason — and because Eritrea has suffered from the non-application by the United Nations itself of the principles of its own Charter and the decisions of the General Assembly — that, upon independence, Eritrea decided to make the ideals, values, purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter the cornerstone of its foreign policy. By its membership, it had also hoped to play an active role in promoting the principle of the universality of membership in the United Nations and in promoting the achievement of fair and equitable regional and international orders.

Eritrea is also fully aware of its responsibilities as a littoral State of a strategic international thoroughfare and has committed itself to contributing its share to the stability and security of the region, as well as to the creation of a zone of peace and cooperation in the region. To this end, it has made every effort to foster an atmosphere that will enhance cooperation among the littoral States of both sides of the Red Sea and promote development and mutual prosperity. It has also played a major role in the transformation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) from a simple natural disaster-control mechanism to a vibrant regional organization which will promote peace and cooperation among its member States, as well as advance economic and social cooperation for development. The recent meeting of the ever-expanding Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, in Asmara, our capital, is a testimony to Eritrea's commitment to the consolidation of the unity of and the

broadening and deepening of cooperative relations between African countries. This commitment will for ever be firm.

In spite of its victimization, Eritrea had decided to forget the past and to start with a clean slate as it evolved a vision, and set its priorities, for the future. It established good relations with all its neighbours on the basis of the United Nations and Organization of African Unity Charters and the principle of good-neighbourliness. It assumed that there would not be any territorial disputes with its neighbours, since its colonial borders were clearly defined and recognized and had been accepted at independence by all its neighbours. It had no reason to assume that its independence would be threatened by any State, near or far, any more than it had any reason to assume that it had the right to use force to expand at the expense of its neighbours. Its sole ambition as a new member of the international community was to make up for lost time in development.

In spite of all its commitments and goodwill, however, Eritrea has, during its brief seven years of formal independence, been tested by and had to defend itself against political pressures, threats and actual attempts which endangered not only its sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also its hard-won independence. True, Eritrea may not be the only new country in history that has been so tested. Yet it must be the only Member of the United Nations whose territorial integrity — indeed, its very existence as a sovereign, independent State — has been threatened and is still being threatened at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

It goes without saying that this struggle to preserve its independence has been detrimental to the nation-building and development efforts of the new State. Yet throughout this time, Eritrea has never wavered in its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the disputes. Indeed, it has solved two of its problems peacefully on a bilateral basis and a third through international arbitration.

It was perhaps during the last two years that Eritrea's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity were most severely tested. What was labelled a border dispute proved to be a serious attempt to reverse history and to recolonize Eritrea — or, failing that, to truncate it, to Finlandize it, and to turn it into a satellite State. This attempt was thwarted by the united

effort of Eritreans at home and abroad. However, the attempt exacted its cost: the systematic and wilful destruction of much of the economic and social infrastructure of the country and the deliberate, brutal violation of the human rights of Eritreans, including the terrorizing and brutalizing of the population in the occupied territories.

Eritrea is convinced that there is no alternative to the solution of conflicts by peaceful means and on the basis of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the existing principles of international law.

From the beginning of the conflict, Eritrea has repeatedly declared that war can never be an option to resolve conflicts, that neither of the parties can settle the conflict by imposing its will and creating facts on the ground and then hope to achieve durable and meaningful peace. It is a clear manifestation of its commitment to peace and the rule of law that Eritrea still remains committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, notwithstanding the occupation of large tracts of its territory, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of its people, the continued brutalization and terrorization of the people in occupied territory and the feverish war preparations for yet another attempt against its territorial integrity. It has already taken bold measures, shown flexibility and made important concessions, however unpalatable they may have been, in the hope of achieving a just peace and in spite of the attempts that are being made to destroy the OAU peace proposals. Again, Eritrea pledges that it will continue to do its utmost to reach a comprehensive and conclusive agreement peacefully.

Yet, the fate of peace hinges on three critical factors. First, the search for peace is a shared responsibility. It cannot be left to only one of the parties. Secondly, peace can be made certain only when it is anchored on the values, ideals and principles of the Charter, which have been emphatically reconfirmed by the Millennium Declaration. Among these is respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Thirdly, peace can be achieved only with the faithful implementation of agreements accepted by parties to a conflict. We invite all concerned to join Eritrea in extending full cooperation to the OAU Facilitators, in making a genuine and unequivocal commitment to the OAU peace process and in being faithful to the letter and spirit of the provisions of the

OAU peace documents, in particular the Framework Agreement and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

At this juncture, I wish to seize this opportunity to renew our appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency President Abdelaziz Bouteflika for his unwavering commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, and to his personal envoy, His Excellency Ahmed Ouyahia, for the wisdom and skill with which he led the indirect talks. We also extend our appreciation to the international community, including the Government of the United States of America and the European Union, as well as other African governments, for their tireless efforts towards the achievement of a peaceful resolution and for the positive contribution they made to ensure the signing of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Algiers on 18 June 2000. We request them to persist in their noble endeavour until a genuine and just peace is really achieved.

Finally, the Government of the State of Eritrea notes with great appreciation the effort that has been exerted, and the commitments made, by the United Nations to ensure an early, comprehensive settlement of the conflict. In this connection, I wish to draw the attention of the Security Council to the urgent necessity of deploying the peacekeeping force authorized by its resolution 1320 (2000) as quickly as possible in order to forestall any avoidable obstacles that may threaten, or even destroy, the gains that have been achieved at great cost and much effort by so many.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Benin, Mr. Joël Wassi Adechi.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): It is my pleasure to congratulate the President on his election. It bears witness to the esteem which the international community has for his country and for him. In wishing him every success in the conduct of our work, I should like to assure him also of the sincere cooperation of the delegation of Benin.

May I also pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the outstanding work he accomplished.

In view of the developments in international relations, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, had the felicitous initiative of gathering the highest

representatives of the peoples of the world for consultations on a new world order and on the role which the United Nations will be called upon to play.

I would like to pay him a well-deserved tribute and emphasize the determined conviction and competence with which he heads the Organization.

The Millennium Summit showed once again that multilateralism and international cooperation remain the best approach to confront problems in globalization. Indeed, the positive effects of globalization remain limited, as is borne out by imbalances in economic and social terms that characterize the world today and violate human dignity and human rights. What must be done therefore is to channel the globalization process towards economic and social progress for the benefit of the greatest number.

In this process, the United Nations has a comparative advantage — it is the only institution able to embody universally accepted values and the only platform for organizing fruitful debate on world issues, as well as on the ways and means for settling them.

The United Nations is the body where the weak and the forgotten are able to make their voices heard and to participate in the attainment of a consensus on questions of common interest.

And, indeed, globalization today is a fait accompli; however, we must emphasize that it is not neutral. Good governance, democracy and transparency must be consolidated not only in national terms, but also in international relations.

These principles must be applied both within States as well as with respect to forces that govern globalization and make use of it as before to avoid any form of democratic control.

At the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government adopted a document which determines the main outlines of the United Nations action for the twenty-first century.

It is now up to the world community and, thus, up to our States, to civil society and to the private sector to show the necessary determination to implement the guidelines of the Summit quickly and resolutely to make a reality of the message of hope and determination which was expressed by the leaders of the world.

Benin is pleased that special attention was focused on Africa. The initiatives taken for the continent require the firm support of the development partners in the sense of a partnership and solidarity which must basically work on the following: a lasting solution to the debt problem; a more just order for the international trade system; support in terms of financial resources and strengthening production capacity.

We call for the effective implementation of measures to integrate developing countries into the world economy taking account of the special needs of the least-developed countries with a view to halting the deterioration in their situations.

The President took the Chair.

In this regard, the holding of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries is of particular importance. It is essential that it lead to concrete results.

The elimination of poverty is one of the challenges that the international community was unable to meet in the twentieth century. It is our responsibility to dedicate ourselves to this task. In this regard, we are pleased with the initiative taken by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize a special ministerial meeting to discuss the strategic orientation of UNDP and the need to provide it with the resources essential for it to carry out its missions. Benin is relying on UNDP, the main body for coordinating development assistance, to meet the challenges facing developing countries.

In commending the countries that have announced an increase in their official development assistance, I appeal for the restoration of a balance in favour of core budgetary resources to make it possible to execute the programmes and projects to which Governments accord priority.

With regard to financing for development, it is particularly essential to ensure that resources are better mobilized and that development action involving all partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions, is better coordinated.

All these programmes and plans can be implemented only in an environment in which peace and security are guaranteed. Benin therefore welcomed with great interest the Brahimi report (A/55/305), containing an in-depth analysis of peacekeeping operations.

With regard to Somalia, Benin would also like to express its satisfaction with the leader of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and all the facilitators for their courageous initiatives to bring peace to that country through a process of dialogue and reconciliation. We appeal to the international community to lend its support to the consolidation of the process so that Somalia can rapidly become part of the community of nations.

Benin is, and will remain, committed to respecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These principles are inscribed in its Constitution. In that context, since the fifty-second session the General Assembly has supported Benin in its organization of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. This Conference will undoubtedly be an important stage in the international community's progress towards the consolidation of democratic principles. At the Conference the old and new democracies will exchange their experiences and commit themselves to promoting democracy, peace and political stability and development. Cotonou is preparing a warm welcome, and hopes that there will be a great response to its invitation.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Narciso Ntugu Abeso Oyana, Chairman of the delegation of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Ntugu Abeso Oyana (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As head of the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and on behalf of His Excellency Don Santiago Nsobeya Efumana, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophone Affairs, I am honoured to address the Assembly.

First, I congratulate you, Sir, former Prime Minister of Finland, on your election to preside over the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We also sincerely congratulate Mr. Theoben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of our sister Republic of Namibia, on the excellent work accomplished during the previous session and on his acclaimed activities in coordinating the preparations for the Millennium Summit, which has just ended.

I also take this opportunity to extend particular congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his team for their full commitment to

promoting the mandate of the United Nations, as well as for the plan to strengthen its future work, as reflected in his outstanding report.

We warmly welcome the Republic of Tuvalu to the United Nations.

Just two weeks ago we celebrated within these four walls the most important event in the history of humankind, when our heads of State and Government established general guidelines that must govern the future of our Organization, and that form a strong foundation on which we can, and must, work. We must now follow up all the proposals and recommendations made by our leaders, with the firm goal of implementing them, which would result in a promising future for all nations — those of the North and South and East and West.

His Excellency Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic, head of State and founding chairman of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, in his address on the first day of the Millennium Summit, affirmed that the turn of the century showed us a threatened world, one constantly in danger of collapse and in a permanent state of uncertainty about its destiny and the survival of humankind, one that conveyed an apocalyptic feeling that was shared by all alike — nations large and small, rich and poor.

In order to follow up the proposals and recommendations of the Millennium Summit, we must start with the fact that democracy begins at home. In our specific case, that means the United Nations, which is our shared home, where the voice of the majority must prevail; that is a basic principle of the historic San Francisco Charter of 1945.

Equatorial Guinea therefore joins the call for urgent, much needed reform and empowerment of the United Nations — an appropriate formula for achieving the fair and just representation of the African continent and other regions of the world, which we regard as a fundamental issue, particularly with regard to the Security Council. If this is not achieved, an environment of distrust may result, as well as a weakening of the role of our great Organization and its all-important task of promoting and ensuring international peace and security.

At present, some individuals enjoy a level of wealth which in the past was inconceivable, while the

victims of poverty continue to suffer intolerable forms of deprivation. The poor remain marginalized and excluded, and day by day their ranks are increasing considerably. Almost a quarter of the world's population now lives in poverty.

Today, pensions and social security protect many individuals from poverty, but poverty in old age remains prevalent around the world. Poverty must be the main concern in United Nations endeavours. The struggle against poverty must be strengthened, and if possible poverty must be eradicated, because the subject of poverty eradication is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind, as is finding solutions to the conflicts and fratricidal wars that take millions of victims in different parts of the world.

Poverty eradication requires an improvement in economic growth and in employment opportunities. The causes of poverty must also be tackled in the context of sectoral strategies, such as strategies for the environment, food security, health, education, population, immigration, housing, development of human resources, rural development, drinking water and sanitation.

Poverty eradication is therefore one of the primary tasks to which the peoples of the twenty-first century aspire, as an action which will promote the development and prosperity of the human being and will consolidate the culture of democracy and the respect for human rights.

Other problems that need analysis and solutions from the international community are the rights of the child, the integration of women in development and the thorny issue of the foreign debt. As for the rights of the child, we must see to it that the activities and the follow-up of the World Summit for Children are integrated with economic actions to be implemented as a result of the other United Nations conferences held in the 1990s. In this respect, we must see to it that there is renewed thinking about the obligations stemming from the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by each country and a renewed commitment to them. This must guide our actions in the future.

As for the subject of women, we must eliminate all discriminatory practices against women and respect the procedures and the provisions that are inherent in the convention on this subject, as well as the recommendations stemming from the Fourth World

Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and from the special session of the General Assembly held in June 2000.

On foreign debt, we fervently appeal to donors that they cancel the foreign debt of the developing countries with the understanding that the funds released will be injected into the most vulnerable sectors in the economies of those countries, such as education, health, water and sanitation.

We are gratified that among the major areas of progress in the twentieth century we see a growing awareness in humankind regarding respect for and promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance. In our country, because of the imperative of survival and the objectives of well-being and progress, we will continue on the agreed path towards the necessary restoration of all the rights to which our vulnerable and marginal groups aspire, in other words women, children, the disabled, refugees and those persons displaced by crisis and disasters. At the present time in Malabo, the capital of our nation, we have officially established the Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights and the Committee in Support of the Equatorial Guinean Child. This Committee was established under the chairmanship of the First Lady of the nation, Her Excellency Mrs. Constanca Mangué de Obiang.

We have also experienced democracy in a spirit of joy with fraternity and without divisiveness, as is described by our national anthem, and also without internal upheaval. The national constitution, known as the Magna Carta of Akonibe, clearly stipulates the establishment and institutionalization of political pluralism in Equatorial Guinea. This has made it possible for a number of political parties to be established. These parties have signed a national covenant with the political party which is in power with the purpose of establishing and strengthening mechanisms for dialogue among the parties. At the present time, all are participating actively in aspiring to political power in the country. In this respect we thank God, the Creator, for having inspired us in this model of participatory and peaceful democracy.

In September 1997 at the Congressional Palace of Bata, the National Economic Conference was held with the participation of all social sectors in our country. In the final report of this important event, we find the recommendations for programmes and projects to be

implemented by the Government in the short, medium and long-term as our economic development strategy.

We cannot conceal our concern at the steady decline in international cooperation resources towards Equatorial Guinea, as we have recently seen in many of the projects and programmes that are implemented in the country with external resources. In this respect we want to avail ourselves of this forum to invite the international community to steadily increase the volume of international cooperation activities in Equatorial Guinea.

With the primary purpose of ensuring peace and security in our subregion, we hope that the United Nations will support the appropriate mechanisms for the maintenance of peace, security, stability, cooperation and development in the Central African subregion, following the political will of the heads of State of that subregion, inspired by the establishment of the Council of Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), a body for political and military agreement among the member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

As regards the promotion of measures for the maintenance and the strengthening of peace and security, we have, within COPAX, a Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC) and an Early Warning Mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC). The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has contributed with determination to financing these institutions so that they can function properly.

We sincerely regret the armed conflicts that exist at the present time on the African continent and in other parts of the world, for example, the case of Angola, the situation of the countries in the Great Lakes region and the crisis in Sierra Leone. We welcome the ceasefire in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and it is our hope that the parties will undertake dialogue with a view to a lasting peace. Likewise, we view with satisfaction the restoration of peace and authority in the sister republic of Somalia. In this respect, we commend the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Islamic Conference and all of those who directly or indirectly contributed to the arduous task of restoring peace to that country.

We strongly condemn the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We support the struggle against crime and the struggle against the global

problem of drugs and related crimes and against illicit arms trafficking and international terrorism. We fully support the initiative reaffirmed by the Central American countries in their commitment to make Central America a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development and particularly to gradually and progressively stimulate the Central American Union to ensure a promising future for that region.

In the Middle East, we congratulate the commendable political work done by the President of the United States Bill Clinton to mediate a lasting peace in the region. We hope that a proper interpretation and implementation of the proposals and recommendations of our leaders at the Summit, as well as the outstanding statements made at this distinguished Assembly, will guide us towards a better and more prosperous future for all the nations of the world.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Adán Guerra, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Guerra (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your well deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its first session of the millennium. Your proven skill and vast experience guarantee that you will ably guide the work of this session. I wish also to express our great friendship for and gratitude to Finland, the country you so honourably represent, whose close friendship with Nicaragua has earned our sincere affection. Let me also thank your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the dedicated way in which he guided our work at the fifty-fourth session.

I wish next to express very special thanks for the contribution made by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who has prepared a valuable report (A/54/2000) on the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century; the report was central in stimulating the discussions conducted by our heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit — an unprecedented event that laid the groundwork for giving fresh momentum to the United Nations.

The process of renewing the Organization requires the strengthening of its organs and institutions so as to enhance the effectiveness of its endeavours in spheres such as the maintenance of international peace

and security, poverty eradication, the strengthening of health and education programmes and the struggle against the destruction of the environment. Without a doubt, that depends on us, the States Members of the United Nations; we must guarantee the Organization the resources and other means it needs to fulfil its mandate and fully to play its role as a centre for exchange of views and for coordinating the efforts of the world's peoples.

In that connection, let me reaffirm the need to reform the Security Council, an organ that is of vital importance to peace and security. Such reform should include democratic, equitable geographical representation and a better balance between developed and developing countries so that the Council will be able to respond fully and effectively to the present needs of our peoples and to future challenges facing them in the new millennium. Here, we see the veto as another element of this sensitive issue that should be addressed seriously with a view to limiting its application to very specific situations and to possibly eliminating it. For those reasons, we believe it to be of paramount importance to reach consensus on all the issues that are inherent in the very structure of the new international order.

We wish also to stress the importance of speedily beginning a process of international discussions aimed at attaining greater consensus and effectiveness in resolving humanitarian emergencies. In another vein, we believe that we must reaffirm our commitment to maintain and strengthen the universal mission of the United Nations to ensure that all the world's peoples without exception enjoy fair representation. This brings me to reaffirm before the Assembly how important it is to give consideration to the longing of one people to participate with legitimate representation as a full Member of the Organization: I refer here to the Republic of China.

Another important matter that the Organization should continue in the new century to address with greater determination is the war against drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Indeed, the flow of drugs is rapidly increasing in our countries, and in but a few years has become one of the most serious of problems, one that directly affects our economic, political and social life. To address that critical situation, we must give priority to strengthening the national institutions that are mandated to combat this scourge, to enacting and updating national legislation,

and to increasing international cooperation and coordination in this sphere. Here, let me observe that Nicaragua has strict laws to punish drug traffickers, and has established a national drug-control plan under which institutions work together in a coordinated manner to attain the stated objectives. We are also working constantly towards greater international cooperation.

At the outset of the new millennium, we see an urgent need to deepen and accelerate progress on ways and means to achieve world disarmament, especially with respect to weapons whose great destructive powers actually threaten life on our planet. We therefore welcomed the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which reaffirmed the conviction that full and effective implementation of the Treaty and of the non-proliferation regime in all its aspects plays a vital role in the promotion of international peace and security.

Similarly, we focus special attention on the problem of conventional weapons and on the existence of anti-personnel landmines, which also pose a threat to human safety and security. We therefore believe it is a priority to meet the obligations taken on by each State under international and regional conventions on these subjects. In Nicaragua, one of the gravest consequences of the armed conflict that was, fortunately, overcome in the 1990s is undoubtedly the presence of a vast number of anti-personnel landmines throughout our territory, a situation that even today claims numerous innocent victims. Accordingly, my country, with the support of the international community, is making an enormous effort to resolve the problem permanently. Along with mine-clearance activities, we have begun the process of destroying mine stockpiles, and have thus far destroyed more than 40,000 mines, in strict compliance with the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Nicaragua reaffirms its determination to spare no effort in the preparations for the third meeting of States parties to the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Nicaragua in September 2001.

We also believe it to be of the utmost importance to reaffirm our commitment to tolerance and respect for diversity. In that connection, we support the preparatory work for the World Conference against

Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

It is essential for the future of the Organization and for that of our peoples that we make a greater effort always to comply with the purposes that half a century ago were laid down in the San Francisco Charter, especially with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. This can happen only with a firm commitment to non-violence and to the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes through the procedures established by international law. That is the key element in preventing future conflicts with grave and enduring consequences for mankind.

For us, it is a source of satisfaction that one of the last vestiges of the cold war is on the way to a peaceful resolution. Here I refer to the dialogue between the two Koreas, which has been launched at the highest level and which will without doubt mark the beginning of promising prospects for the Korean peninsula.

Nicaragua also shares the concern of the international community at the persistence of certain conflicts, particularly on the African continent; these have caused devastating damage to property and the loss of countless lives in countries such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Sudan. It is therefore gratifying that in some of those countries steps have been taken to find a solution to their conflicts. These include the 18 June signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement by Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the implementation of the Djibouti peace initiative for Sierra Leone. We also hail Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolutions, and the stepped-up efforts, since the Camp David summit organized by President Clinton, to find a peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestine.

In the same vein, my country is convinced of the importance of the principle of the self-determination of peoples; we note the urgent need to hold the pending referendum in Western Sahara as soon as possible. To that end, all obstacles to that process must be overcome. Similarly, my country, convinced of the importance of the principle of the self-determination of peoples, makes an appeal regarding the pressing need to hold, as soon as possible, the referendum pending on Western Sahara. To that end, all obstacles to the process must be overcome.

Much progress has been made in this century. Some of the most important achievements have been in the field of the technology revolution. Consequently today we have the great responsibility and duty to begin this new millennium by pooling our efforts to achieve adequate levels of technology transfer to developing countries in order to prevent globalization from becoming a negative phenomenon that exacerbates the marginalization of the poorest countries.

The advantages and the disadvantages entailed by globalization require the developing countries to work together in order to increase their opportunities to successfully confront this phenomenon. An example of this is the decision of the Presidents of Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador to sign a tri-national agreement aimed at giving fresh impetus to the Central American integration process by providing an appropriate political framework for the establishment of a regional customs union, a process launched by El Salvador and Guatemala and which Nicaragua and Honduras have recently joined.

Apart from integration initiatives, continued efforts to achieve solidarity through cooperation for development are vitally important. Nonetheless, we feel it must be emphasized that cooperation activities must be accompanied by appropriate management that offers favourable conditions for small economies to have access to large international markets, obtaining fair prices for their exports of raw materials and manufactured goods. In this respect, we warmly welcome the decision to convene the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development in 2001. That event is of paramount importance to the efforts being made to achieve the objectives established by the Millennium Summit.

The strengthening of the multilateral trade system is also of great importance, which includes, among other things, the prompt and urgent convening of a round of trade negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in which problems are addressed in a comprehensive and integral manner, to lead to an effective reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers. Free trade and the rules governing it should be implemented within the WTO framework so that they benefit all, particularly the poor countries.

It is also essential that the most heavily indebted poor countries be able to aspire to break the vicious

circle of poverty. In this regard, as stated by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of Nicaragua, during the Millennium Summit,

"the unbearable weight of an immense external debt [represents] an insurmountable barrier to overcoming poverty and unemployment. In this respect, we are pleased to note the interest recently shown by the developed countries and multilateral financial institutions in seeking alternatives that would substantially relieve the situation of the heavily indebted poor countries. We hope that this interest will soon be reflected in specific and meaningful actions, so that countries such as Nicaragua can break this vicious circle of poverty and look towards a future with greater opportunities and expectations for sustainability and progress." (A/55/PV.3)

Another important challenge to which we must devote great effort is the conservation of natural resources and the global environment; this is vitally important for the future of humanity, as well as for the prevention of and response to natural disasters. Nicaragua has been cruelly punished by natural phenomena; the effects of hurricane Mitch, which lashed the Central American region in 1998, and of strong telluric movement shook the eastern part of our country, causing loss of human life and considerable material damage are still fresh. Given that reality, Nicaragua, with the valuable assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, became the third Latin American country to adopt a modern law to take the necessary measures to establish an integrated system for disaster prevention and response. Moreover, despite its limited resources, Nicaragua has channelled great energy into the search for a model of sustainable development and of conservation of its natural resources. In that regard, the Government of Nicaragua has established the National Council on Sustainable Development, a pluralistic body in which all the main sectors of civil society participate, in order to promote actively, in accordance with Agenda 21, the implementation of this model of sustainable development.

Our leaders have had the historic opportunity to undertake decisive commitments for the future of humanity. Nicaragua fully shares and reaffirms its commitment to the basic values contained in the Millennium Declaration: freedom and equality, so that we may all live decently, without poverty or violence,

but rather in good health and with education; equity and solidarity, since all peoples of the world have the duty to share and to exchange knowledge and experience that tomorrow will be decisive for human development; tolerance and non-violence, since we can forge ahead only if people respect each other and if States are always prepared to understand each other and resolve their differences through peaceful means; and respect for nature, in order to be able to leave to our children a future in which they will feel proud and optimistic, in which they will walk with their heads high, confident that they are on the right path.

Today is the time to sow, so that tomorrow we will be able to harvest. Today is when we must be aware that we have a shared responsibility, collective and individual, to strengthen the United Nations in order to be able to build a more just, secure and equitable international system for all.

The President: It is now my intention to make some concluding remarks. Thereafter I shall call on those delegations that wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Let me start by again emphasizing the uniqueness of this Millennium Assembly, coming as it does after the historic Millennium Summit, attended by 147 heads of State or Government, the largest gathering ever of world leaders. The challenge facing this Millennium Assembly is to put into action the commitments made by world leaders in their Summit Declaration. The Assembly must maintain the millennium spirit and proceed with a sense of urgency, not with a sense of business as usual.

The Secretary-General reinforced this in his statement opening the general debate, in which he set the tone for the two-week discussion. He said it was vital to find the means to make the Summit's promise a reality and to turn the United Nations into a more effective instrument in pursuing the priorities outlined by the heads of State or Government.

Let me now turn to some of the themes of the past two weeks. The most critical issue facing the international community — the maintenance of peace and security and the role of the United Nations in it — was the focus of many speakers. The need for improving the Organization's peacekeeping capacity was emphasized. In this regard, the debate reaffirmed the mandate given by the Summit to consider expeditiously the recommendations of the Panel on

United Nations Peace Operations. It was noted that today these operations are often comprehensive and complex, involving disarming and demobilizing combatants, supervising elections, monitoring human rights and training local police forces.

Some speakers referred to the need to develop a culture of prevention in order to combat conflict.

In the context of peacekeeping, reference was also made to the need to close gaps between the tasks we ask the United Nations to carry out and the resources we make available to it.

The importance of promoting and respecting human rights as a prerequisite to international security was also emphasized.

The issue of Security Council reform and the need for its composition to reflect the realities of today in order to make the Council more representative and more legitimate was a theme repeated by many. Work for the comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects was also called for in the Summit Declaration. The statements made indicate — I hope — that there is a willingness by the membership to move forward on this issue.

A strong call was made in the general debate to implement the goals and commitments of the development agenda of the 1990s. That agenda was reinforced in the Millennium Declaration, which expressed the commitment of our heads of State and Government. Many statements rightly pointed out that we are far away from the mutually agreed global development targets. Today almost one half of the world's population still lives on less than \$2 per day. There were several calls to bring to fruition the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration to reduce poverty levels by the year 2015. It was also reiterated that conflict and poverty go hand-in-hand. Sustainable development addresses not only the economic and social needs of people, it also contributes to lasting peace. The same goes for tolerance and respect for diversity within societies. I strongly share the view expressed that respect for human rights is one of the cornerstones of development.

Many statements referred to the unsustainable debt burden of the poorest countries and to the unfavourable terms of trade for many developing countries. The need to address the debt burden of

heavily indebted poor countries was reiterated. The current session of the General Assembly needs to address development financing and the roles of various forums and institutions at the forthcoming financing for development event. In my view, decisions on the format, timing and venue of that event must be made without delay.

The discussion touched among many other aspects of human life that require our common attention: the situation of the children of the world, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, racism and racial discrimination, the deterioration of our environment and the pollution of the soil, water and atmosphere, and lack of food security. Many of those issues will be addressed during the current session of the General Assembly.

To mention one of the most acute issues, there is a need for an early decision on the HIV/AIDS special session. I have sensed an urgency from the floor to address this particular issue. To put this plea into perspective, we should remember that every minute several people — mostly young persons and very often girls and young women — are infected with HIV. The pandemic also underscores the need to include health issues in national education and literacy programmes.

Globalization and its impacts, both positive and negative, was one of the overriding themes of the discussion. Globalization provides both opportunities and challenges. Positive impacts have been identified, such as increased economic growth and an improved standard of living. The major challenges, however, remain how to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor within and among countries and how to share the benefits of globalization in a more equitable way. In the course of the debate it was also reiterated that to address globalization we have to think in a multidimensional way. Globalization encompasses not only economic dimensions, but also political, social, environmental, technological and cultural ones. That is why the responsibility for shaping globalization cannot be left to market forces alone. There is a need to guide the process of globalization with political decisions. This is where the General Assembly has a role to play.

As mentioned during the general debate, all this requires enhanced international cooperation, building bridges between societies and improved global governance. International and multinational actors, such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods

institutions, the World Trade Organization and various regional organizations, are becoming increasingly important in harnessing the positive powers of globalization.

Information and communications technologies have an important role in managing globalization, and as vehicles for development. Helping to bridge the digital divide by making information and communications technologies the servants of development is one of the challenges ahead. No one should be denied access to knowledge.

Many spoke of the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development issues while pointing ahead to the Rio + 10 review conference, to be held in 2002. In this context, global warming, climate change and water were among the specific issues referred to. The special concerns of small island States were also raised.

Another important theme of the debate related to disarmament issues. It was noted by many that lasting peace will not be secured until weapons of mass destruction have been eradicated and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has been addressed. Some speakers stressed that in the face of massive human rights violations, the United Nations must not remain paralysed. Others felt that the principle of State sovereignty and non-intervention in their internal affairs was a basic principle of the United Nations Charter.

A number of speakers referred to the need to look afresh at the application of economic sanctions and to the fact that, although they could be used as a tool for peace, sometimes they were counterproductive and penalized the population rather than the targeted rulers. Some said that time had shown that economic sanctions had been unable to achieve their objective. Others pointed to the burden imposed on third parties. There were calls for a review of the sanctions regimes to make them more effective and better targeted.

Finally, let me say that I was pleased to listen to the statements appreciating the need for civil society, in its broadest sense, to participate in the work of the United Nations. I believe that the significance and relevance of the United Nations in the future will depend on our ability to involve civil society in our work. It has played a pivotal role in setting our global agenda. We must let them also participate as our valued partners in its implementation.

Overall, to quote one speaker, the debate reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the validity and importance of multilateral action as being

"the most realistic approach to transnational problems in an increasingly globalized world".

I echo this sentiment and look forward to this being a most productive fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Çengizer (Turkey): The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Vartan Oskanian, addressing the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on 18 September, remarked that the region was adversely affected by the lack of formal relations between Armenia and Turkey, and he went on to bring forth the well-known allegations concerning the tragic events that took place in the early part of the last century.

It is one thing to express dismay at the lack of formal relations and quite another to fervently defame the other party while purporting to wish for a normal relationship. To be precise, it is the Armenian side that insists on imposing conditions on Turkey. It is the Armenian side that insists on the recognition of its singular interpretation of history as the sole and only truthful version. It is time for the Armenian side to look into history with much more impartiality.

What Mr. Oskanian presents as genocide was a most unfortunate tragedy that befell the Turks and Armenians alike at a time when the Ottoman Empire — decrepit, forlorn, partly occupied; lacking means, industrial infrastructure and technological prowess; and further incapacitated by widespread epidemics and starvation — was in the thrall of an imperialist assault.

Today, on this historic threshold, it is not the time to focus on old enmity and hostilities. History is best left to historians, not politicians. It is indeed unfortunate that Turkey and Armenia, two ancient nations living in the same geographical area, find

themselves without normal relations. Precisely in this context, the fact that Mr. Oskanian desires normal relations is gratifying, yet it is ironic, to say the least, that this call is made without grace and is tantamount to asking Turkey to accept a distortion of history. Allegations of this sort will not help to bring about what is lacking. Rather, they do the opposite.

It is also incomprehensible to see a Government aspire to normal relations with its neighbours while continuing defiantly to occupy one fifth of a neighbouring country's territory, which it has done for almost a decade now.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation had no intention of taking the floor at this late stage of our work, especially following the remarkable statement made by Mr. Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation will therefore be brief. We will not respond to the wild imaginings and pointlessly provocative remarks made from the rostrum by our sister delegations from Burundi and Rwanda, which have deemed it necessary to insult the intelligence of the representatives of the States Members of our universal Organization in an attempt to justify their occupation of the eastern part of the territory of my country, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, under the pretext of fallacious, so-called security considerations.

My delegation would like the entire world to know that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, weary of a futile and senseless war of aggression, is seeking and desires peace. We want to live in a strong and unified Republic of the Congo, with its full sovereignty and territorial integrity restored. My people want to coexist peacefully with the peoples of the nine States bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My Government, whose main task it is to ensure the well-being of the population, is open to all initiatives and suggestions that might put a quick end to this barbaric situation, which has bloodied the entire Great Lakes region. This could be through the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, as improved upon by Security Council resolution 1304 (2000), which demands that Uganda and Rwanda, which have violated the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, withdraw their troops without delay; through direct negotiations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the aggressor countries, whose representatives here have not denied the fact that their countries have perpetrated acts of aggression against mine; or through direct negotiations between the Government and those of our Congolese brothers who have decided to resolve conflicts through the use of arms.

What is essential is that we be able to coordinate our efforts in order to obtain lasting peace throughout the region. This might be guaranteed by the international community, perhaps through an international conference. The populations that comprise our subregion, with their wide cultural and ethnic diversity, deserve peace. They have a right to peace, without which any hope for human dignity, for well-being and development, would be in vain and compromised.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): I should like briefly to reply to the remarks about the Chagos archipelago made this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Mauritius.

The British Government maintains that the British Indian Ocean Territory is British and has been since 1814. It does not recognize the sovereignty claim of the Mauritian Government. But the British Government has recognized Mauritius as the only State that has a right to assert a claim of sovereignty when the United Kingdom relinquishes its own sovereignty. Successive British Governments have given undertakings to the Government of Mauritius that the Territory will be ceded when no longer required for defence purposes.

The British Government remains open to discussions regarding arrangements governing the British Indian Ocean Territory or the future of the Territory. The British Government has stated that when the time comes for the Territory to be ceded it will liaise closely with the Government of Mauritius.

The question of access to the British Indian Ocean Territory is at present before the courts in the United Kingdom and is therefore sub judice. The Government of the United Kingdom has the matter under careful consideration and cannot comment further.

Mrs. Assouany (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros.

I merely wish to give some necessary clarifications in response to what was said by my colleague from our neighbouring State, the Foreign Minister of Mauritius. It is very regrettable that some neighbours of our country, to which we are bound by our common interests, whether within the Indian Ocean Commission or because we share certain Indian Ocean values, and some other countries, for reasons unknown to us thus far, are appealing to the international community not to support but rather to condemn a national process that allowed for the amicable resolution of a crisis that would have led to a military confrontation in Anjouan. The Assembly is familiar with the serious consequences of the use of weapons in large countries, and they are even more serious in a small country such as ours. The countries in question defend within regional and international bodies the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, which is essential and precious to our Organization.

Furthermore, with regard to the present regime, it was the intervention of the national development army on 30 April 1999, when disturbances over Anjouan broke out in Moroni, that prevented civil war in Comoros, where the political power of the time was paralysed and the Comorian people rejoiced at that intervention.

I wish to recall also that the electoral timetable established in 1999 has not been implemented precisely because of the refusal of the Anjouan party to sign the Antananarivo accord. Today, with the signing of the Fumboni Joint Declaration, the way is open to again discuss together this Comorian question. The declaration preserves the unity and territorial integrity of Comoros, and the new Comorian entity as a whole is recognized as the only subject of international law within the borders recognized by the international community.

We understand perfectly well the desire of the Organization of African Unity and neighbouring countries to defend the unity and territorial integrity of our country. But we believe that their concern is not equal to ours, as Comorians with interests to defend and to preserve, and could not transcend that. One cannot be more royalist than the king.

We would like to reassure all those who are concerned about the essential aspect of this matter that it is preserved by the Fomboni Declaration. Furthermore, this process enjoys the support of the League of Arab States, which recently adopted a resolution along these lines at its Council of Ministers meeting in Cairo. Other leading partners of our country also support this process.

We therefore leave it to the international community to appraise this situation in order to judge whether we should stick to extremist positions, which are harmful to the population, or find a compromise among Comorians to put an end to the suffering of the people, instead of choosing arms over dialogue.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): When my country, signed the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities with Eritrea, it did so with a full commitment to work for a comprehensive peace agreement. It believed, and still does, that the Agreement went beyond the simple silencing of the gun. The Agreement's spirit was also recognized by a Security Council appeal to both Ethiopia and Eritrea as covering all acts of hostilities, including the kind which we heard about from the Eritrean Foreign Minister.

When my Foreign Minister addressed the Assembly, he did so looking at the future, not at the past. His counterpart, the Eritrean Foreign Minister, alas, promised us in the first part of his speech, which we welcomed, that he would do the same, but went on to the old story of trying to drag us into the quagmire that we thought we were trying to get out of.

We thought that if we had — as we have — matters to raise, this should be done within the context of the negotiations leading to a comprehensive peace agreement; there is a place for it, rather than bringing it up in this Assembly, thus taking your time, Mr. President, and that of everybody else at the close of this general debate. However, under the circumstances, I am left with no choice but to take up some of the points that have been raised in order to set the record straight.

We have been accused of making Eritrea a victim of aggression. We are told that it was a country which had established good relations with all its neighbours. What we have is the opposite. We have a country that became independent in 1993.

It began the following year by attacking one of its five neighbours; in 1995, it attacked a second; in 1996, a third. It began 1997 by quarrelling with its closest neighbour, Ethiopia, leading to an invasion of its sovereign territory in 1998.

This reminds me of an Arabic saying: "He hit me and then hastened to launch a complaint". This is what has happened in our region. When we consider the accusation of the use of force by Ethiopia, we see that it was only an act of self-defence that Ethiopia — after two years of literally begging for peace — was forced to undertake to reverse that aggression. Eritrea talks of expansion and recolonization, but many of us in Ethiopia — particularly in this Government to which I belong — fought for the right of the Eritreans to self-determination and supported them, although many others in my country in fact never wanted Eritrea to secede from Ethiopia. It took political courage to support Eritrea and we have no regrets over that. But then, for Eritrea to say that such a country's Government, which was the first to recognize its independence, has intentions to recolonize it — I think that is laughable, to put it very mildly.

If we had wanted, as a minimum — even without going to war — to deny Eritrea its rightful place, we would have simply not given it recognition. We know from our experience in international law that a number of things have to be clarified before others recognize a country's independence. We have a very good example in our own region of a situation in which one part of another country that seceded and has not been recognized to this day — although that country did not have a functioning capital and still does not — despite the good efforts that have been undertaken in Djibouti.

So Ethiopia cannot be accused of preparing for another war to recolonize Eritrea. There is no such intention; there cannot be and will not be. We have turned our back on war.

But let us look, finally, at the issue of who is still bent on militarizing its own society. In May 1998, Ethiopia had 54,000 troops and not one single soldier on its border with Eritrea. On the other hand, Eritrea, with only 3.5 million people — against Ethiopia's 60 million — had over 200,000 troops in May 1998. Which country had a different agenda for developing good-neighbourliness and for peace? We demobilized almost 1 million troops under the previous Government to reach the figure of 54,000, and we are prepared to

de-escalate again when the right time comes, because our region does not need war. We have to fight poverty, illiteracy and backwardness, not each other.

Finally, as to the issue of this brutal violation of human rights, which has been raised as a distraction, again I would just pass over it by saying that this is not and cannot be proven by anything that Ethiopia has done. In fact, through our Prime Minister, we have brought to the attention of the international community — including your own country, Mr. President, at the highest level — what has been happening and perpetrated by the other side against innocent Ethiopian civilians in their own country, even after the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. It was only a few weeks ago that Eritrea finally signed the Fourth Geneva Convention — it was the last country to sign it — and for the first time allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross access to people it had been supposed to have access to.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): It was not and is not my intention to open a discussion in this General Assembly Hall on the issue of the Armenian genocide and its recognition or on relations between Armenia and Turkey. However, since reference to these issues was made by the representative of Turkey, I would like to make a few points.

The twentieth century began for Armenians with the tragedy of genocide and mass deportations in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and 1923. The first genocide of the twentieth century unfolded in full force and continued until it had consumed the lives of 1.5 million Armenians. That genocide witnessed rape, assault, plunder and the murder of an entire population.

Reference was made by the representative of Turkey to scholars. I have to say that the scholars have done their job. The Armenian genocide is well documented in the relevant archives, including the Turkish, British, American and Russian archives. Let me just make a few references to those archives. I would like to repeat the question here asked by British Foreign Minister Lord Curzon at the Lausanne Conference of 1923, directed at Ismet Pasha, then the head of the Turkish delegation. He said:

"There were 3 million Armenians in Asia Minor before the war. Now there are only 130,000. Where are the rest? Did they commit suicide or disappear voluntarily?"

I would also like to make another reference to a diplomat of that time. The Ambassador of Germany, representing a Government allied with Turkey, also quickly realized what was taking place in 1915. In July 1915, he wrote:

"The Turks began deportations from areas not threatened with invasion. This fact, and the manner in which the relocation is being carried out, demonstrate that the Government is really pursuing the aim of destroying the Armenian race in Turkey."

By January 1917, he reported that

"the policy of extermination has largely been achieved. The current leadership of Turkey fully subscribes to this policy."

All these archives are available and there is no need for scholars to open or to do new research. It has already been done. Based on those and other facts, even back in 1919, the Kemalist court tried and convicted a number of high-ranking Young Turk officials for their role in what the Turkish Government then called the "massacre and destruction" of the Armenians.

The Armenian genocide showed that it could be done. The policy of genocide pursued by the Ottoman Empire went unchecked by other Powers and in time the possibility of such a policy encouraged new brutalities. The most striking evidence of this was the now well-known rhetorical flourish with which Hitler responded to the nervous questions of some of his advisors vis-à-vis the plans for the invasion of Poland in 1939: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Indeed, there is no national history in a vacuum and Turkey's continuing denial of the genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire has only intensified our aspirations to historical justice. Many nations have found that there is spiritual or moral resurrection in the search for validation through truth and in facing their own past squarely. As President Kocharian of Armenia said in this Hall two weeks ago, addressing the Millennium Summit:

"Penitence is not humiliation; rather, it elevates individuals and nations." (A/55/PV.6)

The Armenian genocide is an undeniable fact. When the term "genocide" was invented in 1944 to

describe the systematic destruction of an entire people, its author Raphael Lemkin illustrated the term by saying it was the "sort of thing that Hitler did to the Jews and the Turks did to the Armenians".

Many Parliaments of the world have recognized the Armenian genocide. A resolution of the European Parliament in 1987 referred to the fact that the recognition of the Armenian genocide would be viewed as a profoundly humane act of moral rehabilitation towards the Armenians which could only bring honour to the Turkish Government. Regretfully, denial, which has become an integral part of genocide, often reinforces the sense of insecurity, abandonment and betrayal. But denial is the continuation of genocide; some even note that it is the final act of genocide.

I would like to again refer to the statement of His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian made here this week as part of the Millennium Assembly general debate. I would like to refer in particular to what he said about how the South Caucasus region continues to remain adversely affected by the lack of formal relations between Armenia and our neighbour Turkey. We did indeed, from day one of our independence, opt for normalization of relations and the establishment of diplomatic ties. But Turkey insisted and continues to insist on certain conditions related to Nagorny Karabakh and to the recognition of the Armenian genocide. The economic blockade imposed by Turkey on Armenia of course negatively affects the peaceful solution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and seriously hampers the implementation of the most important regional economic programmes.

Armenia remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, and we will continue to work intensively with the co-chairs of the Minsk Group to seek peaceful solutions to the conflict. We are equally ready to maintain direct contact with Azerbaijan, in order to search for a compromise.

We are confident that constructive dialogue with Turkey, as was mentioned by the Foreign Minister of Armenia, will allow us to jointly pave a way towards cooperation and good-neighbourly relations between our two nations.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The representative of Ethiopia has raised two issues. The first issue, the question of aggression, was dealt with in previous

meetings, but it does honour to Orwellianism to call the defence of territorial integrity aggression.

We are not talking about the past, but rather the commitment to the future. And here it is one's deeds and not one's rhetoric that becomes important.

It is not unknown to those who have closely followed the peace negotiations — especially the facilitators — that the Government of Ethiopia launched a systematic undertaking to subvert and render meaningless — indeed to replace outright — the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Framework Agreement with another agreement, which was not only totally alien to, but also contrary to the letter and spirit of the OAU Framework Agreement and the modalities of implementation — which it had purportedly accepted without any reservations. This campaign started in Algiers on the same day, only three hours after the Algiers agreement was signed, and it was pursued during the Washington, D.C., meeting in early July.

Not many days after the signing of the Algiers agreement, the Government of Ethiopia resumed its harassment, detention, torture, extra-judicial killing and deportation of innocent Eritreans and Ethiopians of Ethiopian origin. Eritrean civilians in sovereign Eritrean territory occupied by Ethiopian forces are being routinely subjected to systematic harassment and terror tactics, as well as torture, rape, confiscation and destruction of homes and property. Fifteen thousand Eritreans were only a few weeks ago expelled from their ancestral places of abode and farms in occupied Eritrean territory. Contrary to the letter and spirit of both the OAU Framework Agreement and the Algiers agreement, the Ethiopian Government has intensified its malicious ethnic hate campaign against Eritreans and their Government.

These are not deeds of peace. These are deeds of war. Now it cannot be denied that the Eritrean Government had undertaken, with the active collaboration of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the voluntary repatriation of two groups of Ethiopians that had been residing in Eritrea. The first group consisted of those Ethiopians who had peacefully and freely resided in Eritrea for a long time, until they, along with their Eritrean co-inhabitants, had been internally displaced by the invasion and occupation of Eritrean towns and villages. These people were sharing temporary shelters with displaced

Eritreans — and sharing the meagre supplies that are provided in temporary shelters — and requested the assistance of both the Eritrean Government and the ICRC so that they could return to Ethiopia. The second group consisted of Ethiopians who did not possess valid residency or work permits. They too had requested assistance so that they could go home.

These two groups were interviewed by the ICRC. The number of people in both groups was about 11,000. In addition, however, there were very few — a handful, really — who had been expelled because they had become undesirable aliens. In all instances the repatriation strictly adhered to the letter and spirit of the procedures and standards established by the ICRC and recognized by the international community.

Now repatriation took place on the same road by which — only a few days earlier — Ethiopian authorities had deported Eritreans and Ethiopians of Ethiopian origin. And this repatriation was initially approved by the Ethiopian Government. There is incontrovertible evidence that those who had departed Eritrea had arrived in Ethiopia safely, and thus any stories that may have emanated from Ethiopia about the danger on the road or the harm that befell these people cannot be taken seriously.

The Ethiopian Government claims that the Eritrean Government was detaining Ethiopians in camps. This claim would be too farcical for comment if it were not a smear campaign. There are no such camps in Eritrea. Eritrea has throughout the conflict opened its doors to human rights non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In any case, since Eritrea signed the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC is also — in addition to its previous regular visits to Ethiopian civilians — conducting regular visits to Ethiopian prisoners of war. Even before Eritrea signed the Geneva Conventions its record during the liberation struggle and afterwards was recognized by these non-governmental organizations as being one of the best. Can Ethiopia, which signed the Geneva Conventions only three years ago — although it is a founding Member of the United Nations — claim to have such a record? Let the reports of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch serve as witnesses.

Mr. Çengizer (Turkey): It is not my intention to dwell here on our disagreements with Armenia. However, after the remarks of the representative of

Armenia I am compelled to say a few brief words in response to just two points.

The representative of Armenia referred to Lord Curzon inquiring about Armenians. Again, Lord Curzon was not an historian. He was a politician. As a matter of fact, Lord Curzon had every reason to be a partisan and partial politician with regard to Turkey. After all, he was negotiating with Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War and in the aftermath of the triumph of the Turkish struggle.

Especially — and as a last point — I strongly deplore the parallel drawn by the Armenian representative concerning Hitler. I would like to remind the representative of just this: there were no Kristallnachts in Turkey, as there were in Germany. And there were no Jewish armed gangs marauding the hills of Bavaria and the streets of Berlin, as we had with Armenians in Turkey. The historical context is vastly different, and I really and strongly deplore the drawing of this parallel to what Hitler did.

This concludes my remarks, but I should also say that it is our sincere wish, at this turning of the century, to come to an understanding regarding the tragic events. Of course the Armenian side should also refer to the more than 2 million Turks and Muslims who lost their lives under the same tragic conditions.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): I am also compelled to respond to the statement by the representative of Armenia in which he referred to the problem of Nagorny Karabakh. The settlement of the problem of Nagorny Karabakh in Azerbaijan is being hampered primarily, as was already stated, by almost ten years of occupation of 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenian armed formations, as a result of which one out of every eighth inhabitants of my country has become a refugee. Azerbaijan has many times stated that it is committed to a peaceful settlement of this conflict, but the Armenian side is showing that it does not want to settle this conflict and is preventing the establishment in the southern Caucasus of conditions favourable for the development of relations with neighbouring countries of the region.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): I very much regret that I have to speak again. We did not intend to use even the first right of reply, but we were forced to do so. I will be brief. We speak of the commitment to the future. Let us practise it.

For the record, Ethiopia signed the Geneva Convention fifty years ago — not three years ago — as can be seen from the record. There is a big difference between fifty and three. An ethnic hate campaign was mentioned once again. Just listen to the propaganda that Ethiopia hears day in and day out in the different languages of Ethiopia from the radio in Asmara and, unless ethnic hate campaign is to have a different meaning, we do not have that, as can be seen from the fact that we still have at least 400,000 Eritreans living in Ethiopia, many of them Ethiopian citizens, but half of them citizens of Eritrea. We have many senior Ethiopians of Eritrean origin in the Ethiopian Government, including the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's office, the defence forces and so on. That does not describe a country that is practising an ethnic hate campaign — it describes a country that has ethnically cleansed all Ethiopians, a campaign that started at a time when we supposedly had good relations way back in 1999 before it became independent, when thousands of Ethiopians were unceremoniously kicked out without their property and many of them remain interned up to this date.

Finally, only recently in July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) testified and indicated its concern, not orally, but by issuing a press statement that can be seen by everybody, whereby they indicated their concern by the way the Ethiopians in Eritrea were being kicked out over swollen rivers, areas filled with mines — something I would not call repatriation in a very humane way. I do not wish to be personal but I find it ironic that these statements are being made by someone — when some of us on this side were fighting for the democratization of Ethiopia and also for the rights of the Eritrean people to self-determination — someone who had a very senior post in the Ethiopian Government and who was opposed to the independence of Eritrea.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I would like to make a few additional comments on the remarks by the representative of Turkey.

Once again, the end of the general debate in the Assembly is not the place to discuss the recognition of Armenian genocide, but I would like to remind the representative of Turkey that the Armenian genocide began with the Kristallnacht. That was the first day, 24 April 1915, the first day of genocide when more than 300 Armenian intellectuals were brutally

murdered by the Turkish authorities, thus signalling the beginning of mass annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

I must also remind the representative of Turkey that the representative of Armenia did not make a comparison, the comparison was made by Rafael Lempinkin, and I quoted him. It was Rafael Lempinkin who introduced the word "genocide". And the comparison of Rafael Lempinkin I quote once again: "the sort of things Hitler did to the Jews and the Turks did to the Armenians". The words quoted were not those of the representative of Armenia.

The representative of Turkey also referred to the fact that two million Turks were killed, but Armenians were not involved in those killings, because Armenians had already been killed when those events took place.

I wish also to refer to the question of Nagorny Karabakh. As I said in my previous intervention, I would like to repeat, once again, that during the last six years, the military phase of the conflict has ceased and Armenia remains committed to a lasting resolution that will provide for peace and security for Nagorny Karabakh and a continuous link with Armenia and we will work intensively with the chairs of the Minsk group for maintaining the ceasefire regime and I reaffirm we will maintain direct contact with Azerbaijan in order to search for compromise.

However, we think that direct negotiations between Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh will be more productive, as it is the people of Nagorny Karabakh who will ultimately determine their own destiny.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): Very briefly, on two issues of fact. The ICRC was involved in almost all of the voluntary repatriations that took place. When it was not, it could not do so because the Ethiopian Government refused to cooperate and those who benefited from voluntary repatriation could not benefit from ICRC assistance. The report by the ICRC resident in Ethiopia, which was mentioned by the representative of Ethiopia with regard to occurrences in Eritrea, has actually been repudiated by the Headquarters of the ICRC.

Finally, I will not indulge myself by answering ad hominem arguments. Ad hominem arguments are the tactics of the weak defending the bankrupt policies of an immoral and illegitimate regime.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 45 p.m.